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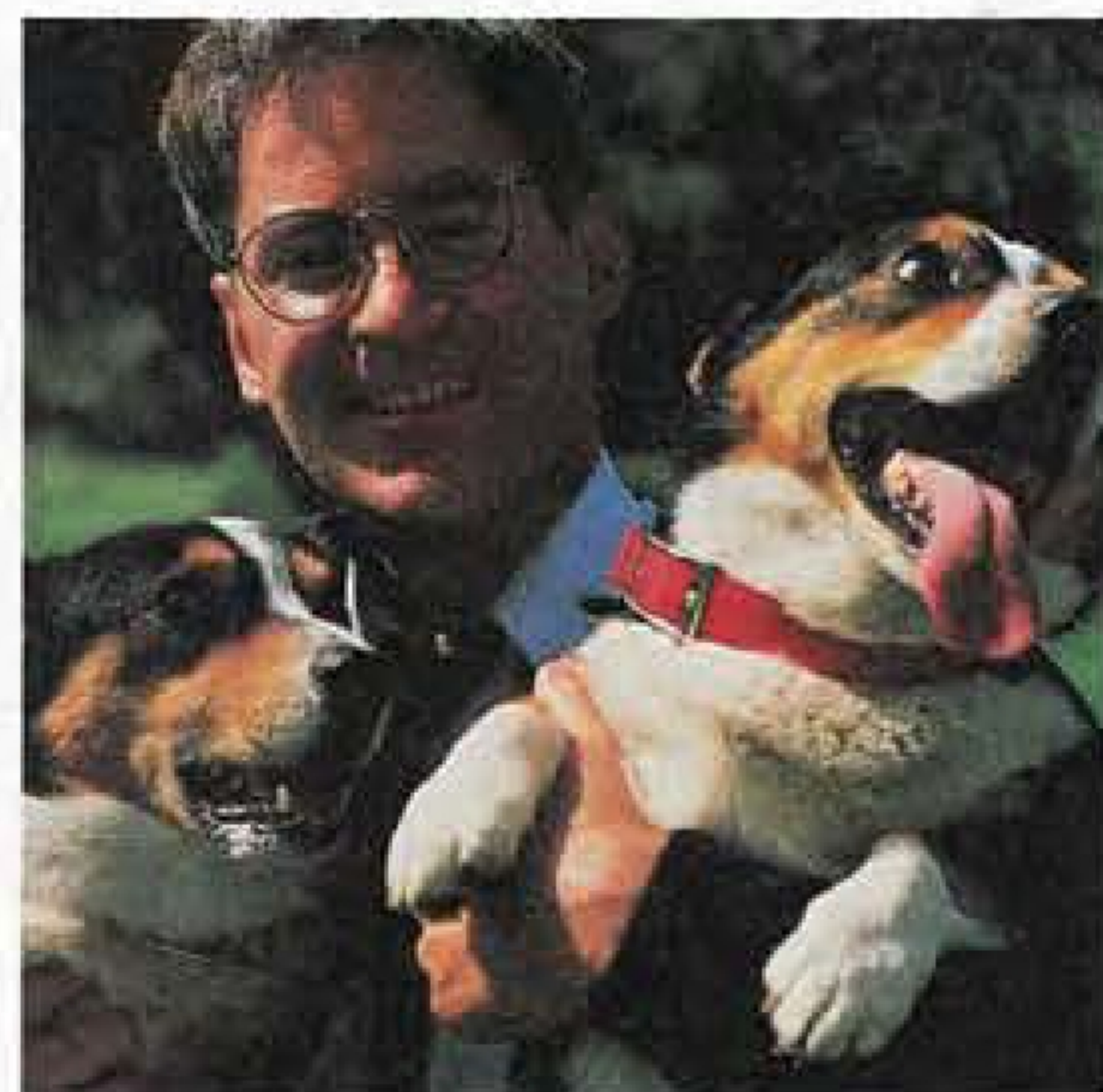
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Sight and Sound



'Dave': 12



'Acción Mutante': 38



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Bruce McBroom

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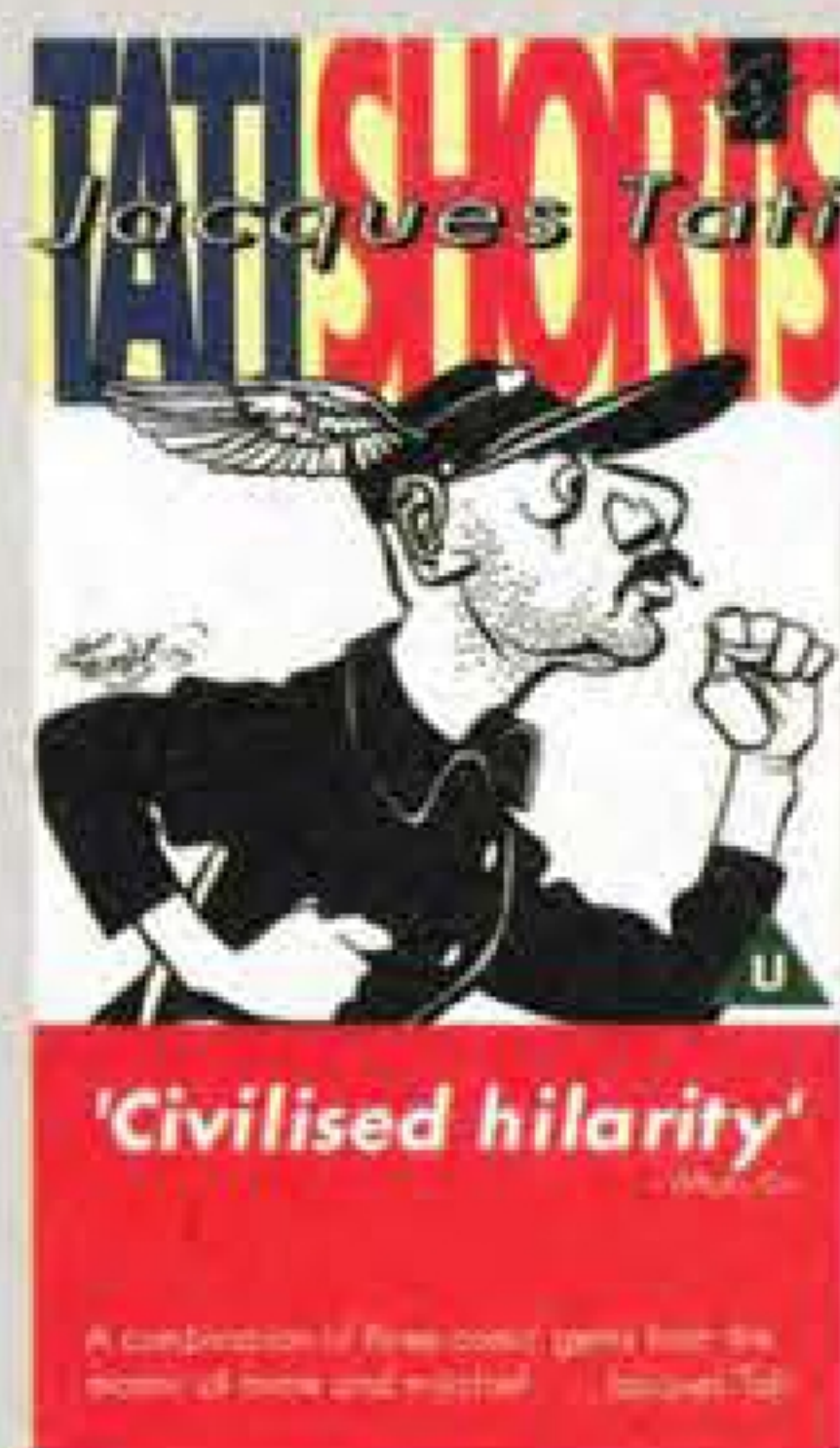


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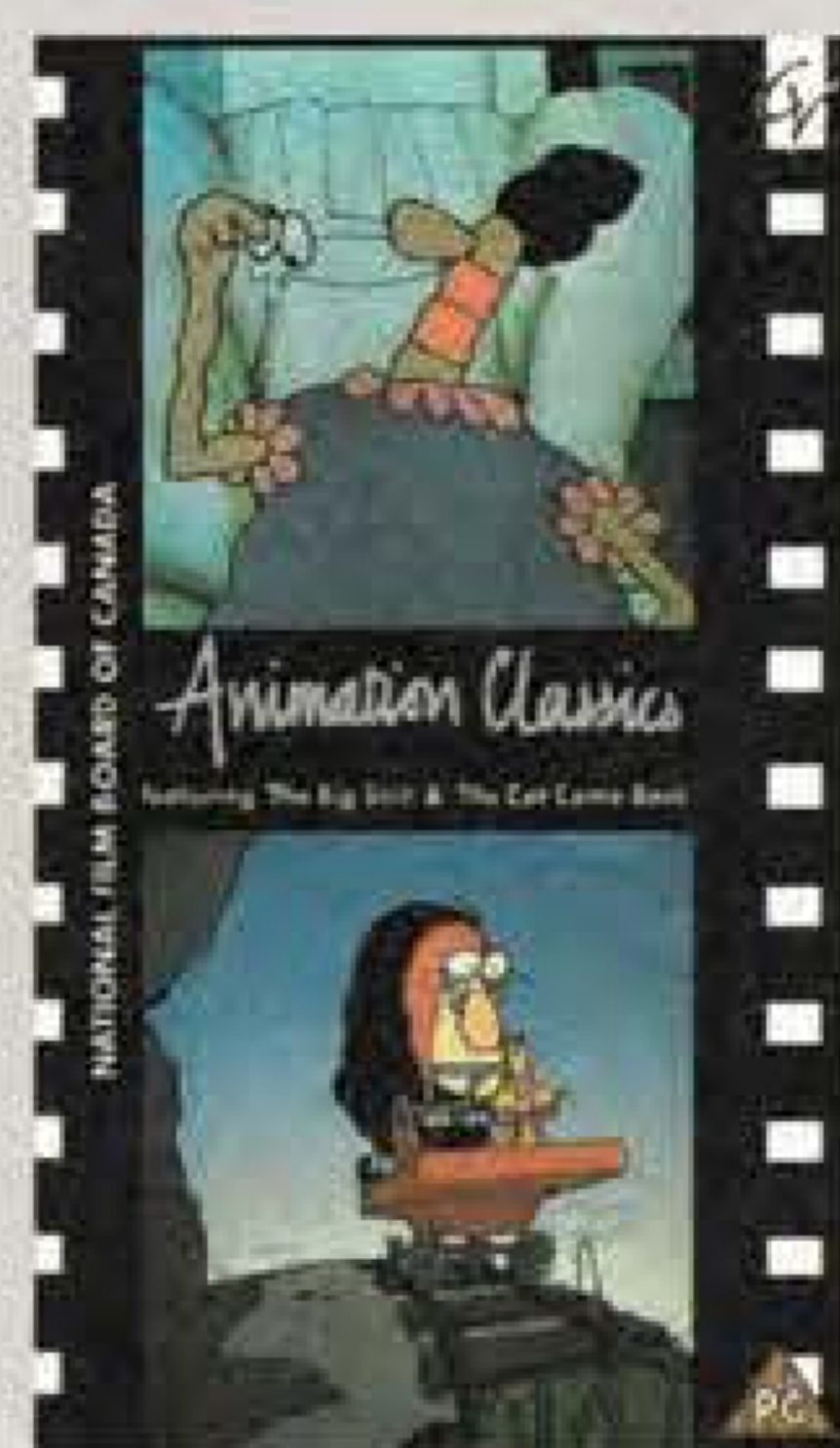


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Breaking the cycle

Contributors to this issue

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Film and television seem increasingly like a travesty of an eco-friendly system in which everything is mandatorily recycled. In the cinema there is a rash of sequels and pastiches which appears to know no end (there is at present talk of *Godfather V*; one hesitates to propose tongue-in-cheek a pre-quel to *The Searchers*, starring Kevin Costner, in case someone takes it seriously). On television, there are the usual reruns of golden oldies during the summer, the surprising recommissioning of many an unremarkable series for the autumn, and the Lazarus-like return to life on BBC of programmes such as *This Is Your Life*.

There is nothing necessarily wrong with sequels. After all, Clint Eastwood seems to have spent the last few years 'revising' his earlier movies, and when Wim Wenders announced that he was making *Far Away, So Close* as a complement to *Wings of Desire*, no one threw their arms in the air and complained of his bankrupt imagination; rather Wenders' decision to work over 'old territory' was seen as the true sign of an auteur. Nor is the matter of sequels and spin-offs a new thing. In the nineteenth century, the wild success of Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* spawned a riot of novel and theatrical sequels such as would have made the producers of *Jurassic Park* green with envy. But what does seem worrying, at least in the cinema, is that the recycling seems a sign of a capitulation to nostalgia.

Nowhere is this clearer than in cinema's turn to television for inspiration. Over the next year we are likely to see cinema versions of, among others, *The Flintstones*, *Maverick*, *The Saint* and *Have Gun Will Travel*. While one or more of the films may be interesting, Hollywood's strategy does seem to concede that the television generations can only be brought into the cinema if they are reminded of the lost glories of their television youth – which through the world of daytime repeats appears to have gained immortality.

Within television itself, the rehearsals of past successes, *This Is Your Life* apart, seem motivated by another agenda: an attempt to instruct the public

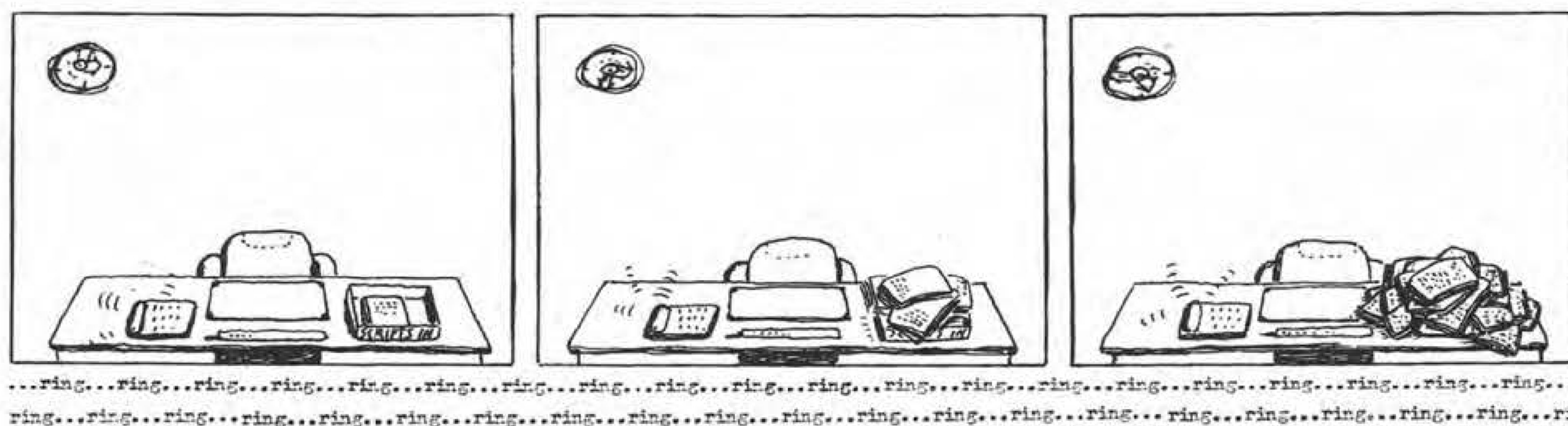
in the glories of British television and to remind broadcasters that television might once again matter to the nation. No one can be in doubt that terrestrial television does need to reinvent itself as something more than a central plank of the leisure industry. In short, it needs to reinvent its public service identity. And there are signs that this is happening. Now that Channel 4 has become a successful commercial channel, its impressive *Bloody Bosnia* is a fierce reminder that it has not forgotten its more-than-commercial obligations. The announcement that BBC has launched *Videonation*, an updated version of the 30s Mass Observation, where 'ordinary people' recorded history from below, is a message to its opponents that it intends to interpret its heritage obligations in more than just stately-home terms.

It may be that we are in for an interesting few years in television. Oral history is in the air; 'ordinary people' have access to cameras; series such as *Homelessness* are given serious space in the schedules and linked to campaigns; the BBC is once again thinking of drama as one of its flagships. All this – and more – is promised, and it needs all of our support. But there is a difficulty. Simply put, television can no longer rely on the assumptions it had in the 60s and 70s. There is now no belief in a 'national', homogeneous audience; there is now no belief in a common culture which television can nurture. And television is now only one of an increasing number of leisure screens in the home.

If the repeats tell us anything, it is that there is no use expecting the public service television of the 60s and 70s to be a template for the public service television of the 90s. Its forms, intentions, strategies and politics will have to be radically different. When Dennis Potter gives the McTaggart lecture in Edinburgh at the end of the month, it is to be hoped that he understands this and we don't get another paean of praise of the past at the expense of the present. Our responsibility to the past must be to break with it.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



The business

● Remember the days when Hollywood was a paradigm of political incorrectness on such subjects as the Vietnam war (won by John Wayne), sexuality (nothing that couldn't be sorted out by a mixture of tea, sympathy and Deborah Kerr) and left-wing politics (part of a sinister global conspiracy run by men with funny accents in suspiciously underfurnished offices)?

Well, those days are gone. Hollywood has finally bitten the PC bullet – and chipped a few teeth in the process. Take the case of *And the Band Played On*, the \$7 million screen adaptation of Randy Shilts' mammoth history of the Aids epidemic which will air in the US as an HBO mini-series on 11 September, but which is due for release in the rest of the world as a theatrical feature.

To judge by the press releases, its production was an impressive tale of commitment: the international film community rallied to the cause with the same glamorous efficiency brought to the American Foundation for AIDS Research by its patron, Elizabeth Taylor. The cast of *And the Band Played On* includes (in alphabetical order) Alan Alda, Patrick Bauchau, Nathalie Baye, Phil Collins, Richard Gere, Anjelica Huston, Tcheky Karyo, Swoosie Kurtz, Howie Mandel, Steve Martin, Matthew Modine and Lily Tomlin. But it took an awfully long time – and quite a bit of wrangling – for Shilts' book to reach a screen of any size.

Over a two-year period ABC turned it down, NBC turned it down, and the stage seemed set for a classic case of Hollywood homophobia before HBO finally took it enthusiastically on board. Even then, the ensuing process – optimistically termed 'development' – involved 17 script drafts and three directors: Joel Schumacher, Richard Pearce and finally, in August 1992, Roger Spottiswoode.

In the light of the subsequent row, Schumacher's reasons for leaving the project are instructive. He reportedly tried to steer *Band* in a more documentary direction. "I didn't feel the first 10 years of AIDS on the planet needed added drama," he told the *Los Angeles Times* earlier this year.

Not for the first time in his career, Roger Spottiswoode came in and changed all that, arguing for more drama and less docu, even if it involved changing history. "There are times when you have to take certain liberties with details," he remarked. Spottiswoode won – at any rate to start with. People who had never met became friends for the sake of a better dramatic focus, and the film acquired a full-blown villain in the form of New York-based researcher Bob Gallo (played by Alan Alda).

But Spottiswoode's approach wasn't



Orchestral manoeuvres in the dark: Matthew Modine and Alan Alda in the censored-or-not 'And the Band Played On'

always welcomed, and the first stage of what was to become a running row erupted just before Cannes, where foreign sales agent Odyssey had a reel ready to show prospective buyers. On 22 April, a letter from Spottiswoode to HBO was anonymously faxed to various Los Angeles newspapers. "A film dealing with an enormously sensitive subject," he was reported as saying, "has become hopelessly politicized by a studio that appears to be terrified of its contents and now seeks to bowdlerize them."

There were also claims that the police were sent into the cutting room to seize the negative, and that HBO had told the director's agent they "wanted him gone." Spottiswoode's faxed letter made astute use of the word "censorious". It all seemed familiar territory: a brave project trimmed to 'acceptable' norms by a repressive front-office.

And thus it stayed for a while: lawyer spake unto lawyer, and everything went quiet until mid-July, when *Daily Variety* reported that Matthew Modine (who plays Don Francis, one of the medical researchers responsible for identifying the Aids virus and the film's central character) wrote to HBO echoing Spottiswoode's original claim. That letter too was leaked and the spectre of censorship reared its head again.

At this stage, however, the PC wand changed sides. HBO responded to Modine's complaint by pointing out that the changes in *Band* had been made at the request of Shilts. What they involved, said HBO, was toning down some of Spottiswoode's early images of the San Francisco scene, which tended to imply that the city's gays were all promiscuous, drug-

abusing bath-house habitués.

What HBO (at Shilts' behest) appears to have added to Spottiswoode's film are a number of scenes featuring gentle and generally monogamous people à la *Longtime Companion*. HBO, added chairman and chief executive officer Michael Fuchs, had shown the new version to no less than 17 different Aids and gay rights groups. "The people who are most concerned with this issue are generally pleased with the product," he said.

And now for something completely different. After months of speculation, it has been announced that Tom Cruise will play the vampire Lestat in Neil Jordan's 'Interview with the Vampire', a project taken on earlier this year by record-company millionaire David Geffen (S&S May), which is slowly but surely developing into a major mainstream production.

Even so, Cruise is reported to be taking rather less than the \$13 million-a-picture he got for 'Far and Away', 'A Few Good Men' and 'The Firm'. This is apparently because he wants a break from good-guy roles and a chance to develop the "dark side" of his character.

Other actors with a major stake in 'Vampire' include Brad Pitt as Louis, the central character in the first of Anne Rice's two books (which shares its title with the film), River Phoenix as the interviewer, Stephen Rea as Santiago and Antonio Banderas as Armand.

● Bruised but not broken by the labels "malicious" and "ragbag of reheated rumours" (see Letters, page 64), the author of this column feels called upon to update the *Variety* story, but will stick to facts which be can easily verified, so as not to be thought jealous of *Variety's* position as market leader.

1. Terry Ilott, most recently managing editor, *Variety Europe*, left at the end of July. Ilott, a trade journalist with over a decade's experience and author (with Jake Eberts) of *My Indecision Is Final*, the definitive (and very readable) history of Goldcrest Films, was by anyone's standards the paper's best and most knowledgeable European reporter.

2. The initial inside pages of weekly *Variety*, which used to be hard news, have, since just after the last issue of *Sight and Sound* went to press, been given over to an up-market gossip column called 'Buzz', which used to be a single page on the inside back cover. Buzz is undoubtedly a good read, but does it deserve this prominence (about 20 per cent of the entire text space in the 9 August issue) in what is still a newspaper?

3. Weekly *Variety* is getting smaller. The average size of an issue in June and July 1992 was just under 80 pages. In June and July 1993, it was just over 60 pages.

4. There are fewer film reviews, once the paper's pride and joy for their scope and volume. The last four issues published before this column's press date contained a total of 29 film reviews (and one of those was a duplicate). The equivalent four issues in 1992 contained 74.

Now to more serious matters. Those of us who periodically write about Britain's lack of any form of film subsidy system have grown weary of pointing out the advantages of France's 'avance sur recettes' scheme, under which approved productions get a dollop of money repayable to the government in more or less last position should the film by any chance recoup.

The more European of our readers will doubtless have noted that there was recently

a change of government in France, and that 'liberal' is not a term that many would use to characterise such measures as have so far been introduced by the Balladur regime. Inevitable, then, that it would soon turn its attention to the film subsidy system. The first sign of the cool winds of monetarist change that are likely to blow through the French film industry came with last month's publication of a report on the Centre National de la Cinématographie by government auditor, the Cour des Comptes.

The report was highly critical of the CNC's operation as a whole, but particularly damning of the 'avance sur recettes', where the subsequent financial tracking of projects awarded a grant was felt to be somewhat inadequate ("grave negligence" was the phrase used).

The Cour also pointed out that the scheme's rate of return has dropped from 40 per cent in the 60s to 9 per cent today; that the CNC listed at least 10 films as never having been released, whereas in fact they were released under a different title from the one on the CNC's books; and that money due to be repaid if a film did not get made rarely (if ever) was.

SEOUL NOTES

Clean cuts

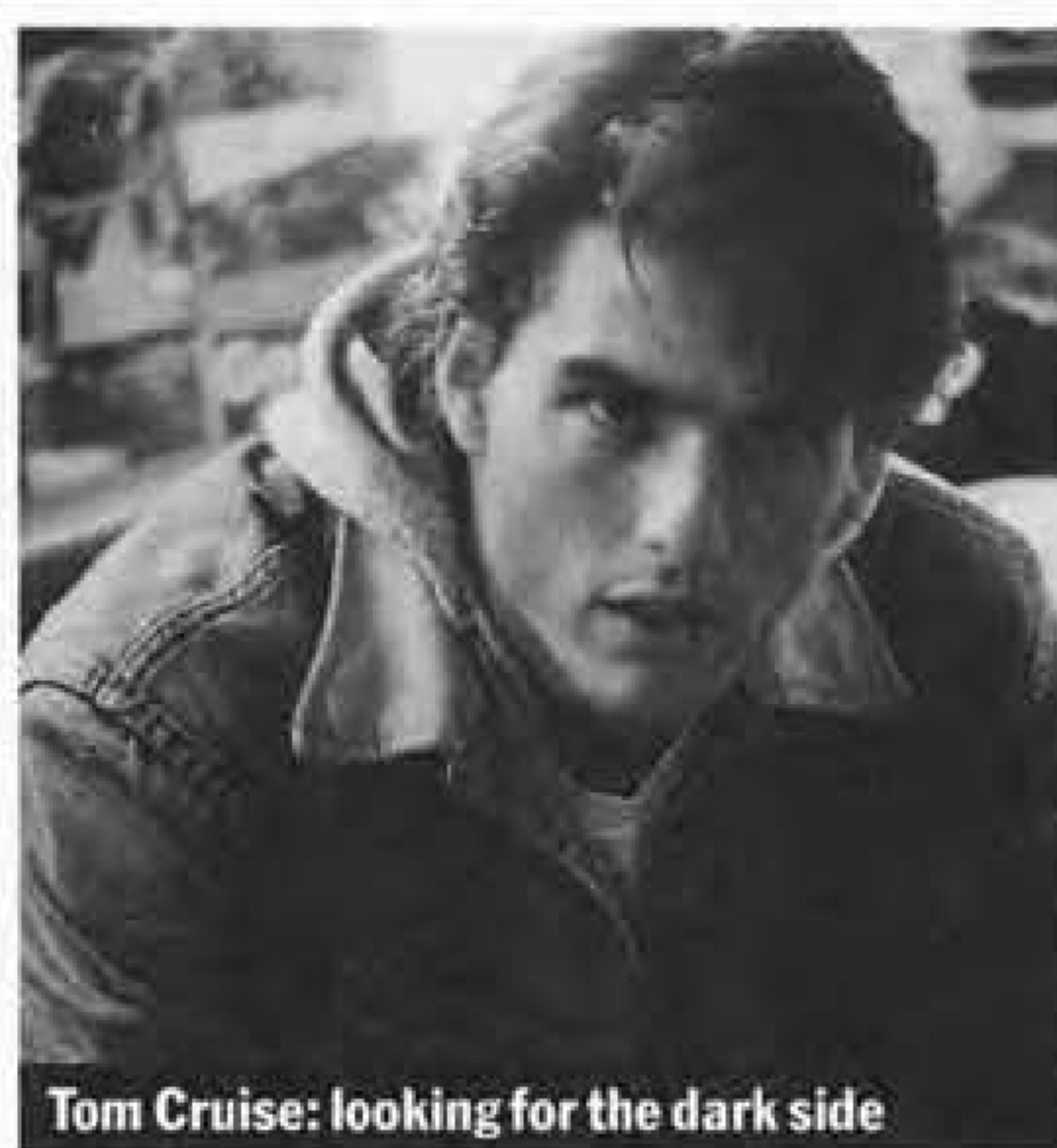
When, last February, the former dissident Kim Young-Sam was elected South Korea's first civilian president in 32 years, his inaugural speeches had two dominant themes: clean, open government and renewed moral fibre. Neither of these ideals has proved easy to realise.

Like Clinton in the US, Kim has had great difficulty in finding suitably 'clean' candidates for senior political posts in his reformist administration. He was forced to fire five cabinet members within days of their appointments after anonymous (but disarmingly accurate) revelations of financial irregularities were telephoned to newspapers. The issue of morality is more complex, because it cuts to the heart of the contradiction between Korea's strong Confucian-patriarchal heritage and the country's status as one of East Asia's 'dragon' economies – with all that the latter implies about social changes and growing openness to foreign ideas and influences.

Aside from questions of political and financial propriety, the main skirmishes around 'morality' have occurred in the areas of television and film censorship. An edict went out in the spring, for example, prescribing certain standards of dress for persons appearing on TV. More recently, the innocuous teenybopper group Suh Tae-Ji & The Boys were banned from TV when they came back from a visit to Japan sporting an approximation of dreadlocks; this problem was

● Still, the CNC came off better this summer than one-time Japanese movie dynasty Nikkatsu, which filed for bankruptcy protection on 1 July. Founded in 1912 and originally one of Japan's four major film companies, Nikkatsu lost ¥6.9 billion (£45 million) last year and has accumulated debts of ¥50 billion (£322 million).

Not that Nikkatsu's history has been entirely trouble-free. In the 20s, the company was more or less the inventor of Japanese cinematic realism. In the 40s, it merged with two other companies to form Daiei, as a result of which it ceased production but continued to operate its own cinema chain. Production began again in the 50s, when Nikkatsu was home to such directors as Shohei Imamura, but shut down in 1969 because of poor box office. In the 70s and 80s, unable to fall back – like its fellow majors, Shochiku, Toei and Toho – on massive real-estate holdings, Nikkatsu had increasingly relied on grinding out softcore porn films (it produced 1,000 or so between 1971 and 1988), but the



Tom Cruise: looking for the dark side

company made a couple of stabs at returning to 'art' films at the turn of the last decade.

All this came to a halt last month, when company president Masao Wakamatsu announced an end to trading with a distinctly Japanese statement. "I did not anticipate the very serious economic situation in which we now find ourselves," he said. "I should like to present my apologies to Nikkatsu employees and their families."

solved by a hasty trip to the barber. It remains to be seen whether Korean TV journalism will develop its own independent-minded stance; given the sudden influx of satellite channels (which include BBC World Service TV, via Hong Kong's Star TV), there are signs that it might.

Film censorship is the responsibility of the Korean Ethics Committee for Public Performances, which has a long history of grovelling subservience to military governments to live down. The new broom sweeping this particular closet clean is Kim Dong-Ho, a career civil servant who was previously president of the Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation and Vice-minister of Culture. Kim Dong-Ho has a deserved reputation as one of the country's most reasonable and open-minded bureaucrats; I can recall several long, heavy-drinking dinners in the bad old days of the Roh Tae-Woo administration at which he sat with film students and young people from the film industry, listening to their criticisms of government. He has certainly shaken things up in the months since he was appointed to chair the committee.

Previously banned titles like *Etat de siege*, *Hoffa* and *Sarafina* have been cleared for release. Yi Chong-Kuk's independent feature *The Song of Resurrection* (Puhul ui Nore, which deals with the notorious Kwangju Massacre of 1980) has been passed uncut; when it was first submitted in 1991, the

committee imposed 28 minutes of cuts. The only major sticking point so far has been Louis Malle's *Damage*, which is banned on account of its "unethical subject"; the distributor SamHo Films plans an appeal. One significant breakthrough was the passing uncut of *The Crying Game*; Kim successfully persuaded his committee that the shot of Jaye Davidson's penis was crucial to the meaning of the film.

No such enlightenment has prevailed in Tokyo, where the equivalent ethics committee ordered the offending penis obscured. A Japanese newspaper survey of patrons leaving a cinema after watching *The Crying Game* discovered that many of them thought Stephen Rea ran retching to the bathroom because he found that Jaye Davidson had some terrible disease like leprosy.

But things are slowly changing in Japan too. Pressure on the ethics committee from distributors has prompted a new ruling that full nudity is OK so long as it does not appear in a sexual context. This clears the way for Tilda Swinton's pubic hair in *Orlando* – like *The Crying Game*, a movie in which one censorable shot is central to the overall meaning. But it probably won't help Peter Greenaway's *The Baby of Mâcon*: the hordes of naked extras may pass this time, but Ralph Fiennes' protracted death-throes (he is murdered in *flagrante*) seem certain to go. Tony Rayns

Three recently announced projects suggest that, whatever may be happening to the old Filmverlag der Autoren – the company founded by the originators of the New German Cinema, progressively abandoned by them during the 70s and 80s and now in considerable difficulty – 'author cinema' still has a home in Germany.

Doris Dörrie, who has not made any real international impact since 'Männer...' ('Men...') in 1985, began shooting 'Keiner liebt mich' ('No One Loves Me') in Cologne in late July; Oscar-winning actor Klaus Maria Brandauer is to direct a film version of Thomas Mann's 'Mario und der Zauberer' ('Mario and the Magician'), and will also star in it alongside Anthony Hopkins; and Hungarian director Ildikó Enyedi will finally be following up her 1989 Cannes Caméra d'Or winner 'Az en XX századom' ('My 20th Century') with 'Freischütz', a Franco-Hungaro-German co-production based on Weber's opera, which will go in front of the cameras in Budapest this autumn.

● In Hollywood, meanwhile, the word 'author' means something quite different. To be more precise, just at the moment it means someone very rich – or it does if you're the right kind of author.

Michael Crichton – who wrote *Jurassic Park* and *Rising Sun* – is definitely in that category. Why? Well, take the following description of the enigmatic cop, Connor, in *Rising Sun*. "Broad-shouldered, balding, with a trim mustache, sharp features, piercing eyes. Deep voice. Calm." Sound familiar? Surprised that the film role went to Sean Connery? You shouldn't be. Crichton wrote it with Connery in mind: the film was packaged before the novel was even published.

Following the two megahits adapted from his oeuvre, Crichton is hot property in Hollywood. Also a studio-friendly kind of guy: his latest novel, as yet neither titled nor published but dealing with sexual harassment, was being touted round town this summer. Word apparently went out that if the eventual buyer of the film rights was unhappy with the ending, it could be changed before the novel was published. Warner Bros liked the idea. Crichton received \$3.5 million.

John Grisham, author of *The Firm* (another major summer hit), *The Pelican Brief* (now in post-production) and *The Client* (in production) went even better: he recently sold his next novel to Universal for \$3.75 million. And he hasn't even written it yet, although studios were apparently given a brief synopsis.

On this incremental scale, Author X can presumably expect \$4 million for promising to think about an idea, Novelist Y \$4.25 million for agreeing to call next time he has one, and Novelist Z \$4.5 million for having his agent reveal his telephone number.

● Bastrop, Texas. Sitting in a custom-built bus during a break in the shooting of his latest film, *A Perfect World*, Clint Eastwood, who can currently be seen in the thriller *In the Line of Fire*, looks relaxed and remarkably fit. But there are signs of heat-induced weariness and work-stiffened joints. As he speaks, for instance, he props his feet on a vibrating pad.

Eastwood, 63, has reason to be footsore. In addition to co-starring with Kevin Costner and Laura Dern in *A Perfect World*, a drama set in 1963 about a charming sociopath (Costner) and the grizzled, relentless Texas Ranger on his trail (Eastwood), Eastwood is also directing the film, his first since his Academy Award-winning 1992 Western, *Unforgiven*.

Costner plays Butch Haynes, a hot-tempered escaped convict who bonds with a seven-year-old boy he saves from a child molester. Eastwood is Red Garnet, a weary Texas ranger who has known Haynes for years and was in fact the

first police officer to bust him as a teenager. Laura Dern plays Garnet's fellow police officer. The film is set in the months just before the Kennedy assassination – familiar psychic territory for the man who played Jim Garrison in Oliver Stone's *JFK*.

Outside the trailer, under a blazing Texas sky full of billowing clouds, it's 95 degrees and the humidity is as high. Eastwood, whose instantly recognisable face is a Monument Valley in miniature, seems able to conserve his energy. He moves and talks with the deliberate ease of a man who's in no hurry. And it's easy to see this personal style as a metaphor for his entire career. To that end, after winning two Academy Awards last spring, Eastwood did just what he's always done, whether his films have been scorned or acclaimed: he went right back to work.

First he finished *In the Line of Fire*, a Wolfgang Petersen (*Das Boot*, *Shattered*) film that adds yet another memorable Eastwood character to a roster that includes the Man With No Name, Dirty Harry and *Unforgiven*'s William Munny. As Frank Horrigan, a secret service agent who was on duty in Dallas when Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 and now has to protect the current president from another assassination threat, Eastwood is more accessible than in any of his previous screen roles. This is no Dirty Harry Goes to Washington. An effortlessly charming wreck, Eastwood's Horrigan is a "borderline burn-out", a jazz piano-playing dinosaur seeking redemption in an age of spin doctors and

high-tech politics. When the would-be assassin (John Malkovich) promises to see him "standing over the grave of another dead president," Horrigan's destined to be quoted, though not necessarily inviolable, response is "That's not gonna happen."

James Verniere: Was the film 'In the Line of Fire' written for you?

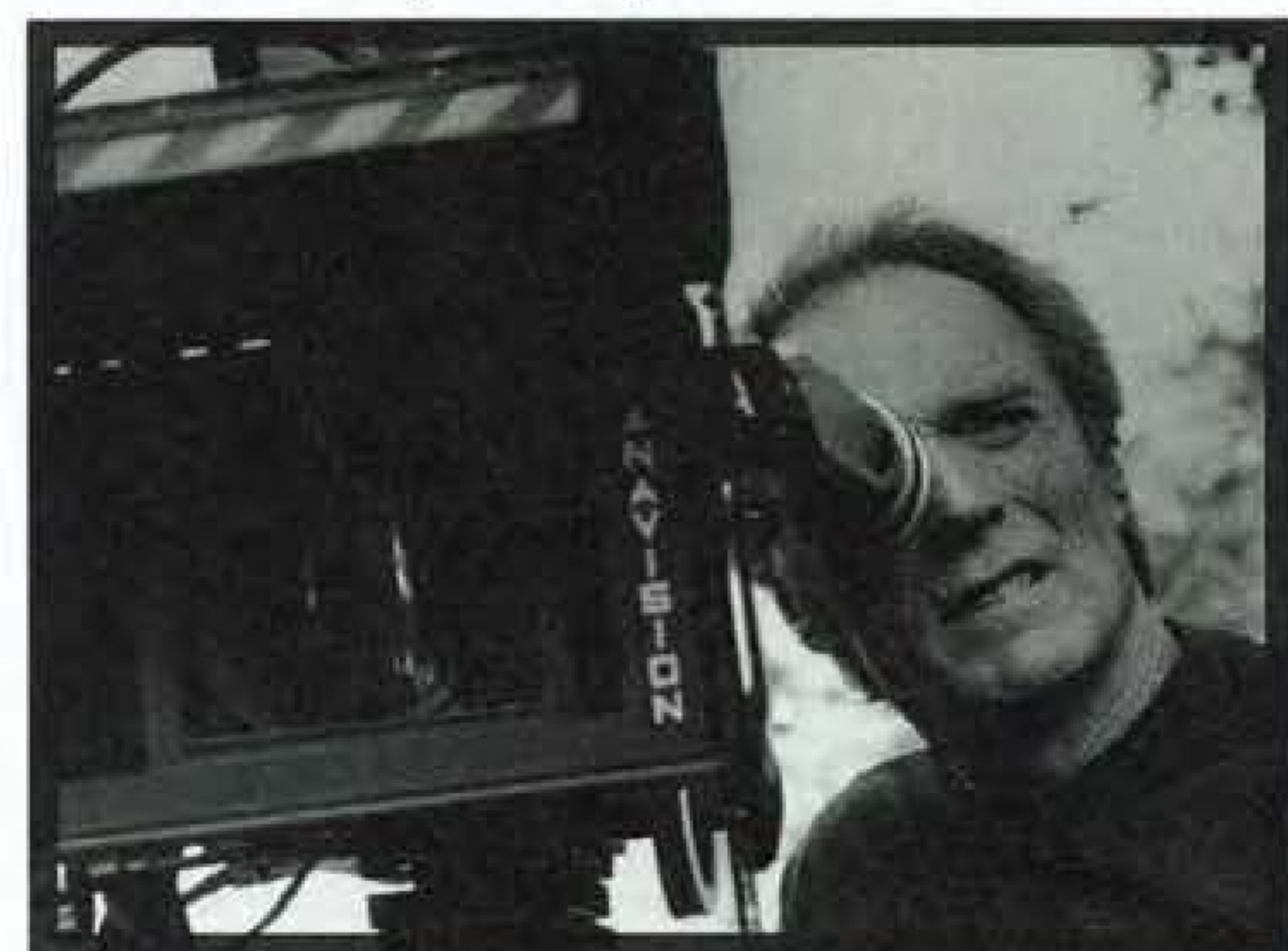
Clint Eastwood: It sure sounded like Jeff Maguire had me in mind, but I don't know for certain. I've been told he tried to submit the script to me at Warner Bros, but I didn't get it. My agent just called me up one day and said, "Have you ever read this thing at Columbia? It's about a secret service guy who likes jazz and plays a little piano." So I read it and I liked it. It had interesting challenges, and like *Unforgiven* it gave me the chance to play a man who is haunted by a mistake he made in his past. It's tough to find good characters today, characters who have somewhere to go.

The rapport between you and John Malkovich, even though many of your scenes are telephone conversations, is intense.

Telephone conversations are hard to make interesting a lot of the time, but John brought a lot of dimension to it. He plays the character as a very intelligent psychotic; it's a pretty formidable combination.

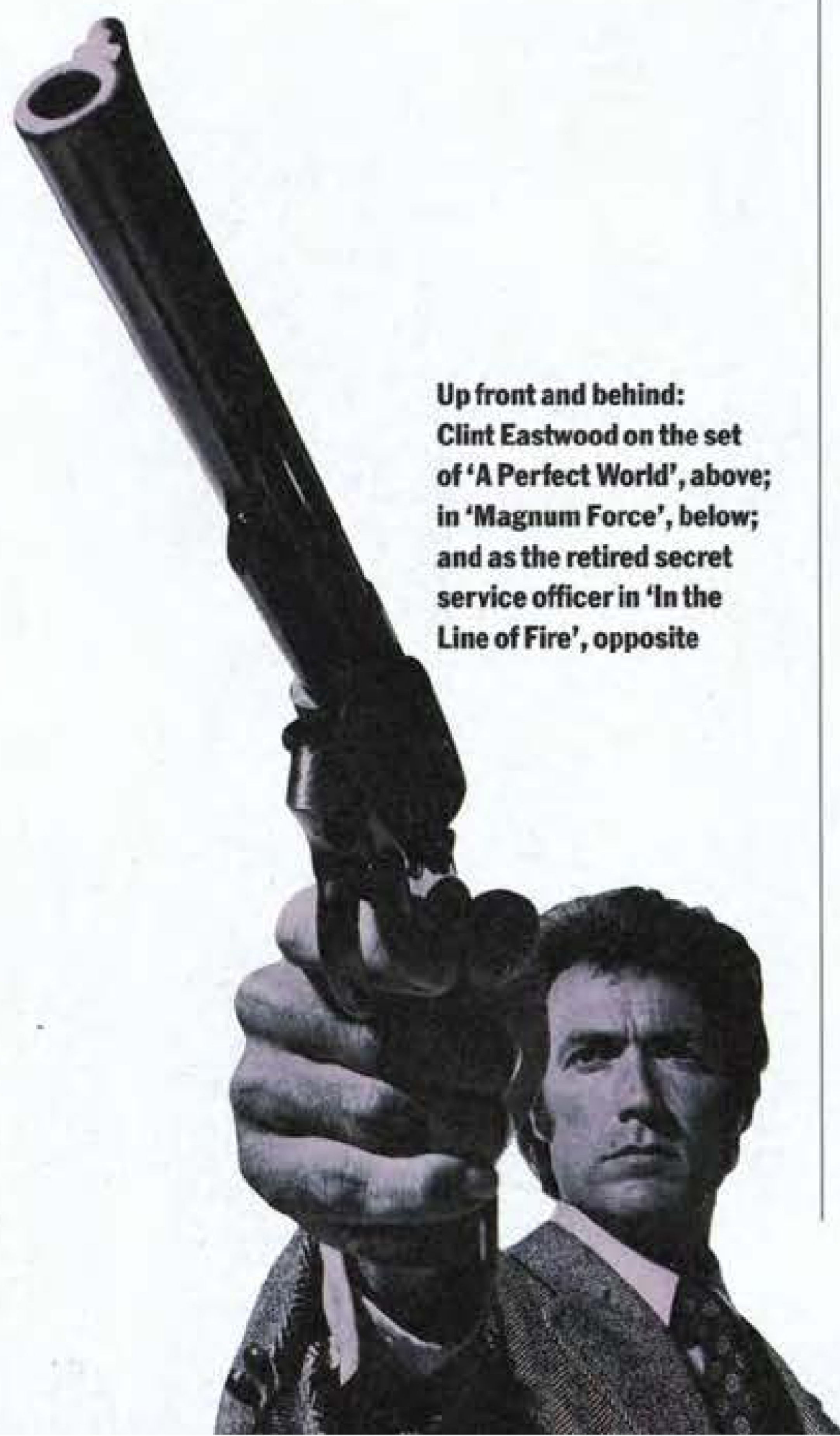
Did he do anything on set to stay in character? For example, did he avoid you, or give you evil looks, or skulk in the shadows?

No. We're both of the school of getting in there and doing it, and we were both there when ►



Clint Eastwood reflects on his new thriller, on working with John Malkovich and Don Siegel, on breaking the mould, violence on screen – and voting for Ross Perot. By James Verniere

CLINT EASTWOOD STEPPING OUT



Up front and behind:
Clint Eastwood on the set of 'A Perfect World', above; in 'Magnum Force', below; and as the retired secret service officer in 'In the Line of Fire', opposite



◀ we shot the phone calls, so we didn't have to do them with a script person.

Like 'Unforgiven', 'In the Line of Fire' represents another revision of your image. In many ways Frank Horrigan is to Dirty Harry what William Munny was to the characters you played in your earlier Westerns. They're both men with guns and badges, and they're both mavericks in a way. But at the same time, they're very different: it's a different time in their lives.

So your characters have changed as you have changed. I hope I've changed. My father once said, "You either progress or you decay." Sure, as you get older, there are parts you can't play any more. But there are also things you can play that you could never play before. The older you are, the more background the characters can have.

Is Dirty Harry defunct? Do you have any plans for another film?

No, no plans at all. Sequels were OK at one time in my life, but now I feel that if I do a film, and it feels right to me, maybe it should then be left alone.

Then it's not the audiences, but you who have outgrown Dirty Harry.

I think so. As the years go by I'm attracted to subjects that are a little different from the ones I was attracted to 30 years ago. I don't know where I'd take Harry any more. I could change him philosophically, but that's what Frank Horrigan is.

Are you still a Ross Perot supporter?

Well, I voted for him in the last election, and I agree that we need change. I think people have become disenchanted with politics, the constant rhetoric, the lack of substance.

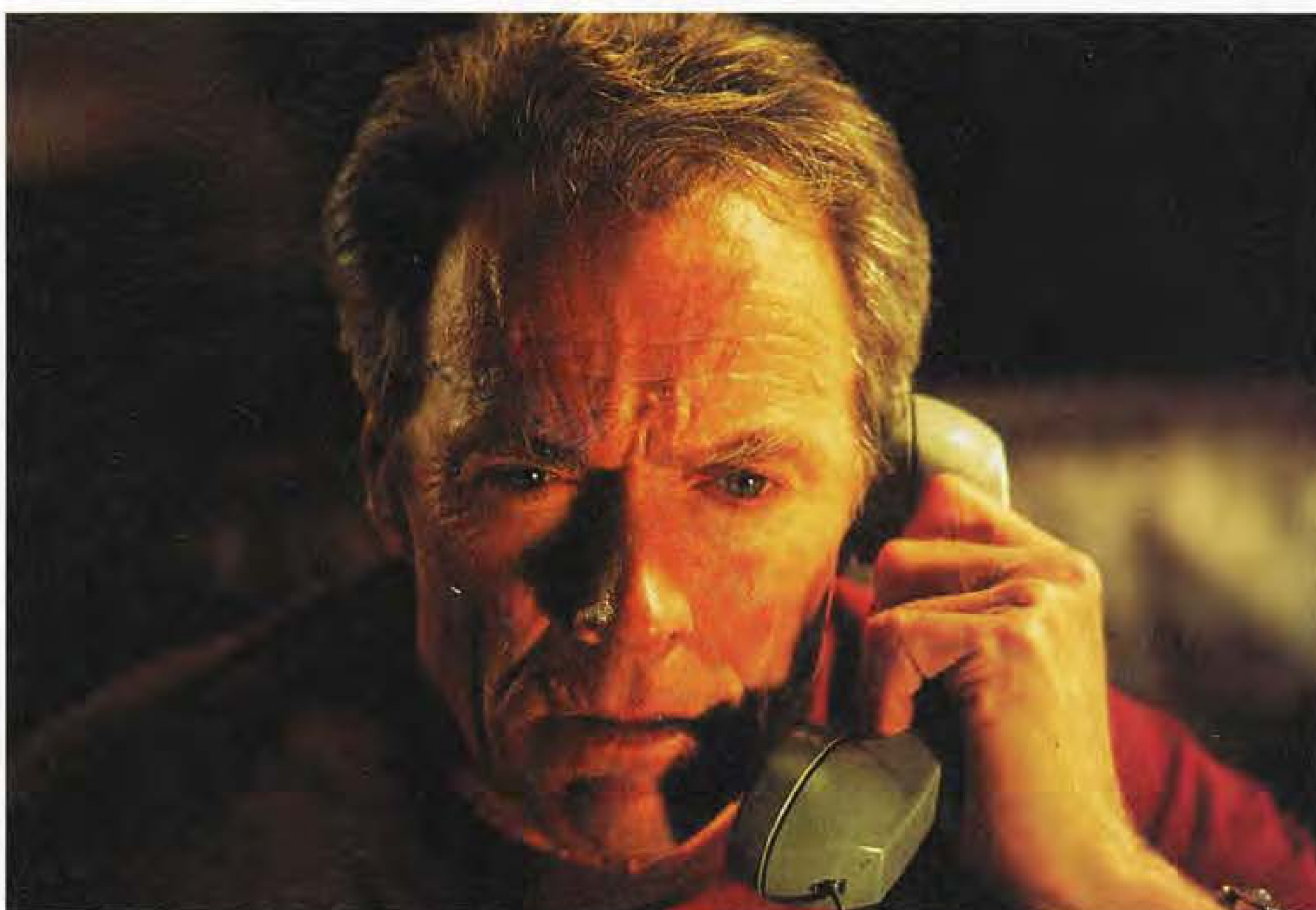
The reason I ask is that the Dirty Harry films address themselves to the disenfranchised masses who feel at the mercy of corrupt political systems, and like Perot, Dirty Harry has tremendous popular appeal. It must have been edifying when President Reagan quoted your, "Go ahead, make my day!" line.

I don't know how terrific it was: you get a little tired of people saying, "Make my day!", or asking you to say it.

Don Siegel, who directed 'Dirty Harry' and many of your other films in the 60s and 70s, played an important role in your development as an actor and director. You made two or three films with him before you directed 'Play Misty for Me' in 1971, and, of course, in that film you cast him as the bartender.

I always like to joke that I hired Don in case I got stymied, but he was so nervous about acting that he would have been useless to me. Don's influence will always be with me. He was a unique guy. He didn't have the stature of a Ford or a Hawks and he was often given B-movie projects by the studios, but he made some unique films: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Riot in Cell Block 11* among them.

Siegel also directed *Coogan's Bluff*, one of the first films I made after working in Italy. We met by accident: Universal had hired a guy named Alex Segal to direct *Coogan's Bluff*, but for some reason he couldn't do it, so the studio said, "We've got this guy named Don Siegel." I said, "Don't you have anybody who's not named Siegel?" – I didn't know Don's work at the time. The studio let me see some of his films, including *Madigan* which he had just finished, and he watched my Leone films, and we decided to



Haunted: Eastwood as the agent tortured by regret in 'In the Line of Fire'

work together, and I was able to bring a bigger budget to him. It would have been nice for him to have ended his career on a high note, but few do. Not many people are that fortunate.

There was a time when you played similar types, the mythic, monolithic screen hero. Then there was the middle period during which you did quirky, off-beat films such as 'Bronco Billy' and 'Tightrope' in between 'Dirty Harry' movies.

Those smaller, different projects are probably what led cumulatively to films like *Unforgiven* and *In the Line of Fire*. I was always too stubborn to believe that straight shoot-em-ups were going to be the end-all for me. Maybe *Bronco Billy* and *Honkytonk Man* didn't do the kind of business that *Sudden Impact* or *Every Which Way But Loose* did, but they gave me the confidence to do something like *Unforgiven*. I feel very much like the John Wilson character in *White Hunter, Black Heart*. When you make a picture, you have to forget that anybody might ever see it.

What did the smaller films teach you?

They taught me not to be afraid to step out and do something different. I've seen other actors do some crazy films that they got criticised for, and I've always admired that.

Do you remember when Burt Lancaster made 'The Swimmer'?

Exactly. I admired *The Swimmer*. In fact, Lancaster and Kirk Douglas stepped out a lot: Lancaster with *The Swimmer*, Douglas with *Town without Pity* and *Lonely Are the Brave*. I admired those guys then for doing that when they could have played it safe. I've tried to explain that to other film-makers who have made a few successful films. I tell them that they really don't need to make another one. They need to do something different and get themselves satisfied.

What's different about Clint Eastwood at 63? Some critics have suggested that your films now address moral issues.

I can't tell you how it happens, but as you get older you tend to get more concerned about the moral values of society. I'm not talking about violence in movies. That's just entertainment. As I said when *Unforgiven* came out, I wasn't

doing any penance for the mayhem in my other films. I suppose it's just a time in my life, and maybe a time in history, when violence shouldn't be so lighthearted or glamorous. Maybe there are consequences to violence, for both the perpetrator and the victim, that are important to address.

So you don't buy the argument that violent films are damaging to society?

My generation grew up with films like *White Heat* and *Public Enemy*, and they didn't turn us into criminals. It's great to blame it all on the film and television industries, because they always run scared.

You're a product of the Second World War and Korean war generation, yet you haven't lost touch with today's moviegoing audience. How is that?

Those were my formative years, but they weren't the end of my life. Music didn't stop in the 40s, although I think they were great years, when swing and bebop came along. Everything moves onwards. You have to live in the world as it is today.

Although you didn't direct 'In the Line of Fire', you had a say in who would. Why did you choose Wolfgang Petersen?

I loved *Das Boot*. Some of his later films have been better than others, but I always felt he had a certain size and that he brought a certain scope to his films. I got the feeling that he prefers John Ford movies to television. Too many of our young directors make films that look like television. Although I don't want to sound superstitious, I also thought that a European might take a different look at American subject matter, in much the way that Sergio Leone did in the 60s. *Castle Rock* had some other people they might have preferred, but I've been directing for 23 years and I didn't want somebody who was brand new to the field. I wanted somebody with experience.

It has been reported that you stepped in personally when Columbia studio executives tried to force Petersen to make 'In the Line of Fire' more action-oriented once filming had begun.

A couple of front office people came down and

suggested changes. I said, "You know fellas, you liked the story well enough to make it. I like the script. Everybody likes the script. You should let it get made, give us a chance to finish it, and then make your decision." If you let these things get committee-ised, you're through.

How did you come across the John Lee Hancock script for 'A Perfect World'? What did you like about it?

Warner Bros had it and showed it to me. It's a crime drama that's also about the family unit and how it has changed.

You co-star with Kevin Costner: 'Dances with Wolves' meets 'The Outlaw Josey Wales'. Like you, Costner has played a lot of mythic hero types. But in this film he's an escaped convict and con man. Do you think this role will be good for him?

I think it's always good to stretch. You can't really hit the ball out of the park unless you step up to the bat. He's been in a few successful films and he's proved he can do that. Now it's his chance to move out to things he really wants to do, to become more versatile.

Your film sets are notoriously laid back. Did he have any problem getting used to that?

I think he enjoyed himself, but I can't really speak for him.

Critics have compared him to Gary Cooper and Steve McQueen. Does he remind you of these actors?

I think he's got his own appeal – that's why he's successful. Everybody is always trying to make comparisons, but we tend to forget that actors like Gary Cooper played a lot of different roles. Bogart and Cagney did too. They weren't afraid to play villains. Today, actors are more protective of their image, but sometimes you can play it too safe.

*The title and pre-Kennedy assassination setting of 'A Perfect World' suggest a Norman Rockwell world that's about to go sour. Is there a specific look that you're trying to get to parallel that theme, if that's your theme? That's exactly the feeling we're trying to get across – a Rockwell world that's on the verge of fading. Jack Green, who was also the cinematographer of *Unforgiven*, is trying to get some of that Rockwellesque feeling into the film. But it's difficult, and it remains to be seen if we've achieved it. Right now we're down to the last few days of shooting, and I haven't seen all the footage together.*

In the past you've made it almost a point of honour to refuse to get caught up in the awards game. So what was going through your mind at the Academy Awards ceremony?

Last December the Los Angeles Film Critics Awards and Boston Society of Film Critics gave us the best picture award. We missed at the New York Society of Film Critics by one vote. So you start thinking, "Well, maybe I have a chance," and you get a little irritated because you've gone all your life without this kind of stuff, and you don't really need it. But deep inside, you say it would be nice to get.

I went in feeling good, and I was going to try to be graceful, win or lose. But when we didn't win for cinematography or screenplay, I thought, "So here I am with my 84-year-old mother. I brought her all the way down here, and we're gonna go home empty." Your mind plays tricks on you. But when I saw Barbra Streisand open the envelope and smile, I knew. I understand that Emma Thompson wrote you a note

after an awards ceremony at which the two of you were winners.

She wrote me a nice note recalling watching my movies with her late father. He was an advocate of simplicity in acting, and he admired my films, and she liked them too. Now here's a gal who's having a nice successful year, along with me, who watched my films as a child. As you get older you start to run into more and more people who go way back with you, who maybe saw one of your films on their first date. It's as if you've become part of the landscape.

European critics were among the first to re-assess your films and career and to give you credit for the work you were doing at a time when you were under-appreciated in your own country. What did that mean to you at the time?

I think European critics were much more interested in the history of cinema. When my first films came out in the early 60s, there were a few American critics who responded – Bosley Crowther was one – but by and large they were in the minority. A lot of them put my films down. European critics were more interested in what Sergio Leone was doing and in what I was trying to do as an actor, and they'd follow me along every step of my career. They were very quick to recognise changes. They jumped on *Bronco Billy* as a major change and when I moved to directing in 1970 they were extremely encouraging, right away, while American critics were saying, "Well, we're not even sure we like him as an actor." There were exceptions to this, of course.

Do you think that there was a reserve of prejudice against you?

I think some people are that way. There is a certain snobbery behind it. The French were always laughed at by the Hollywood establishment for taking notice of Jerry Lewis' work. What the hell. The guy was writing and directing films. I always admired that. He was trying things. In the last 20 years a lot of younger American critics who are more knowledgeable and open-minded have arrived. In the 40s and 50s a lot of our reviewers didn't have much knowledge of film or of its history.

You were born in 1930, the son of a labourer. Do you think that growing up in the Depression made you a firm believer in the work ethic?

I think that's definitely the case. Every guy I know who grew up in that period feels much the same way. They either give up early, or they work without stop. My mother talks about the past with nostalgia, as if it was a lot of fun. I remember when it wasn't so much fun. But by and large I don't think much about the past. I'm a today and tomorrow kind of guy.

Have you ever considered retiring? You've had a couple of dry spells over the past ten years.

Sometimes the films you make don't find an audience. But I never let that bother me. I always think about today and tomorrow. Of course, I've thought about easing back and retiring, but then again I should be doing my best work now, and I think I am. I should be taking advantage of this time. When the day comes that the studios don't want to use me any more, it'll be OK. I've had a long ride.

'In the Line of Fire' opens on 27 August and is reviewed on page 48 of this issue

**What kind of actor is Clint Eastwood?
Amy Taubin looks at his career**

AN UPRIGHT MAN

● As the hottest July in history dragged into its second week, Chief of Police Raymond Kelly informed the citizens of New York City that he was entertaining the possibility of beefing up his Internal Affairs division (the cops who investigate cops) by hiring out-of-work actors to do undercover work. Actors, Kelly speculated, would bring a certain distance to the job that might be useful.

The implication was that actors wouldn't be troubled by the loyalties that sometimes prevent real cops whose job it is to inform on their corrupt brethren from carrying out their duty. Legal objections prevented the plan from being implemented. But that it was considered at all indicates a staggering slippage (staggering even in the society that twice elected "Ronnie le Cowboy" to the White House) between the screen and the real world.

The kind of actor Kelly had in mind is the bit player whose anonymity allows her/him to disappear into the role of '2nd cop', for example. Rarely would a viewer give a thought to the identity of the actor playing such a role. Rarely would an actor in such a role be photographed to call attention to her/his identity apart from his/her function in the narrative as '2nd cop'. And it's the identification of the actor with his/her on-screen action that allowed Kelly to presume that an actor who can play a cop in movies or television can pass as a cop in real life. Kelly wasn't thinking of Clint Eastwood when he put out his casting call.

That'll be the day

Towards the end of *In the Line of Fire*, which opened in New York within days of Kelly's outlandish proposal, Eastwood is confronted by reporters eager to learn why he has retired from the secret service. He tells them that they've ruined his cover by plastering his face all over the papers and television, and that besides, he's too old for field work.

It's one of those reflexive ironies so crucial to the Eastwood persona. Who is it that we've been watching for two hours? We've been watching Clint, probably the most recognisable male movie star in the world. We've watched him pretend to be a secret service agent who does undercover work when he's not guarding presidents. Clint's fame hasn't ruined him for this particular movie narrative, though no one in their right mind would hire him to go undercover in real life. The ways we equate a star like Clint with the roles he plays are vastly different from the way Kelly assumes that ►

◀ an actor who has played a cop on screen can pass for a cop in his precinct.

An amusing, fast-paced, Hitchcock-derived thriller, *In the Line of Fire* doesn't stand up to serious scrutiny. One goes to it to see Clint, which is somewhat different from the way one goes to see Jack Nicholson, or Mel Gibson, or Sean Connery. One goes to see Clint to check out the current construction of masculinity in American culture. For over 20 years, arguably since *Dirty Harry*, Eastwood has been the reigning icon of masculinity, a position he inherited from John Wayne. (Eastwood/Harry appropriated Wayne/Ethan's tag line from *The Searchers* "That'll be the day!" to mark his first confrontation with authority. "Make my day!" came later.)

But unlike Wayne, Eastwood does not only embody masculinity, he is also its analyst and critic. The Eastwood persona is riddled with contradictions, under siege from within and without. The contradictions are not resolved within any single Eastwood film, but are played out across the entire body of his work as actor and director. If *Unforgiven* is the most fully achieved and severely pessimistic of Eastwood's deconstructions of male violence, its conflicts were rehearsed in both *Tightrope* and *White Hunter, Black Heart* and were flirted with as far back as *Dirty Harry*.

Truly a millennial film, *Unforgiven* was in fact written at the end of the 70s. Eastwood bought David Webb Peoples' script and held on to it for ten years, until, he claimed, he was old enough to play William Munny, the reformed gunslinger who, having renounced the killing that was his only pleasure and source of income, turns his anger on himself – until a call to avenge the honour of a prostitute allows him one last return of the repressed. Released in 1992, *Unforgiven* seemed as much a parable of the end of the cold war as it was a reconsideration of the gunslinger as hero. Imbued with the politics of regret, it was also the first film of Eastwood's old age, and the myth on which it cast a backward glance was, in part, his own. Impossible to contemplate, the future was reduced to a mocking two-line epilogue: "He moved to San Francisco where he made his fortune in dry goods."

Squint and grimace

The politics of regret also informs *In the Line of Fire*. Here Eastwood plays Frank Horrigan, a secret service agent who describes himself as "a white, heterosexual, piano-playing male over the age of 50." Frank was the agent closest to JFK when the shots rang out in Dallas. And ever since, he has been haunted by his failure to save the president. What prevented him from hurling himself on Kennedy and taking the second, fatal bullet himself? Was it cowardice or just slow reflexes? Since the film subscribes to the Oliver Stone theory that America wouldn't be in such a mess had JFK not been assassinated, Frank has a lot to feel guilty about.

This is pretty hokey stuff on which to hang a movie. And *In the Line of Fire* would be of minimal interest were it not for its subtext on the art of acting. Like *Tightrope*, *Sudden Impact*, *Unforgiven* and the two orang-utan comedies *Every Which Way But Loose* and *Any Which Way You Can*,

In the Line of Fire is a doppelganger movie. In terms of narrative, the simplest way to define Eastwood's construction of masculinity is to juxtapose him with a character who is everything he is not – in the films mentioned above, a psychokiller, a woman (who from certain angles looks like his twin), the spectre of his murderous past, and a primate respectively. Moreover, the presence of the doppelganger suggests the extent to which the Eastwood persona is involved in repressing the behaviour and desires the doppelganger represents.

The doppelganger of *In the Line of Fire* is a would-be presidential assassin who also was once a member of the secret service. On the level of character, the inverse mirroring of hero and villain is at best schematic. As performers, however, Eastwood and John Malkovich set each other off in fascinating ways. The assassin's plan for killing the president entails more than half a dozen identity transformations. And virtuoso shape-shifter Malkovich provides a step-by-step course in the art of acting – precisely the kind of acting that Eastwood never attempts.

Malkovich's assassin shows us how to apply false noses and false bellies, how to adjust facial muscles, how to change a gait or the centre of balance in the body. A quick-change artist with a steadfast sense of purpose, his goal in every incarnation is to destroy the Eastwood character by killing the president. The movie suggests that his talent for masquerade is a sign of his evil; there's something feminine in his narcissistic involvement with his image. That the Malkovich character is a feminised man (a man who plays dress-up and is not who he seems to be) is made explicit in the first face-to-face encounter between the two, when the assassin performs mock fellatio on the Eastwood's character's gun.

Eastwood, in the course of 35 years as an actor, has played as wide a range of characters as Malkovich creates in this film, without ever altering his distinguishing physical characteristics – the menacing squint and grimace, the angry twitch of the upper lip, the military



Masquerades: John Malkovich as the face-changing villain

straightness of the spine. In one sense, Eastwood is a physical actor. He's extremely aware of the impression his face and body make on the screen – and that the less he does, the more powerful he appears. He has the kind of facial bone structure the camera loves, and his body is in amazing shape. At 63 he can still perform feats of strength and endurance.

And yet for a physical actor, Eastwood has always been a bit of a stiff. What we notice first about him is the tension in his face and body. The facial muscles are clenched so as not to reveal emotions; the torso is rigid with the effort of remaining upright. Not for Eastwood the easy grace of John Wayne (or of Malkovich, for that matter). In Wayne's version of masculinity there was no problem in telling 'black from white', no distinction between authority, justice and individual freedom that couldn't be resolved by the hero who embodied all three.

Eastwood's persona, however, is a descendant of the most twisted of Wayne and John Ford's creations: Ethan in *The Searchers*. It's doubtful whether Wayne and Ford ever understood how pathological Ethan was. Yet for 70s film-makers including Eastwood, Ethan was a key to the dilemma of masculinity – that privilege is wedded to the anxiety that one might at any moment be unmanned (in other words, feminised) and that the result of that anxiety is misogyny and racism.

Perverse desires

One could read the lack of flexibility in Eastwood's body as a deficiency in acting skill or talent. But it's also what makes Eastwood uniquely suited to represent masculinity under siege. Eastwood's body is a metaphor for the psychological and moral struggle to be an upright man. It's a body that is not so much threatening as it is under threat, not only from outside forces but from its own perverse desires. It's a body that's terrified to give way.

What's remarkable about Eastwood is his increasing willingness to reveal the sado-masochistic impulses he's at such pains to control. The eroticising of violence was there from the beginning – in the fetishisation of the 44-magnum and the casual surfacing of rape fantasies. (In the scene in which *Dirty Harry* quotes Ethan's "That'll be the day!" he answers the mayor's charge that he has used undue force on a suspect with a description that smacks of wish fulfilment: "When a naked man is chasing a woman through an alley with a butcher knife and a hard-on, I figure he isn't collecting for the Red Cross.") In the later films, the Eastwood character recognises the perverse desires as his own, but is at a loss as to how to relinquish them, if indeed he wants to.

The consistency of Eastwood's physical presence from film to film is not merely the strategy of a star. It's a testament to the unchanging psychological dynamics of his masculinity. That's not to say that he's unresponsive to social change – particularly in the area of feminism – but rather that his primary struggle is with his own psyche. At the end of *In the Line of Fire* his character quits the secret service to become a house husband. As role reversals go, it's not even skin deep.

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A devout movie fan, Bill, together with Hillary and their daughter Chelsea, make up the new target family for Hollywood. What are the films of the new Clinton era? By Martin Walker

CLINTON'S HOLLYWOOD



Washington. The first myth of Ivan Reitman's forthcoming *Dave* is as enduring as power itself. Its roots lie in the fairy tales of the kindly peasant granted three wishes: that someone too unassuming to achieve power in the usual dirty way has it thrust magically upon them, outwits the wicked courtiers and does good. A pleasant, bleeding-heart, bicycle-riding fellow who happens to look like the ruthless president, Dave (Kevin Kline) is summoned to be his double in public while the head of state enjoys some extra-marital sex. Suffering a stroke in mid-stroke, the president is incapacitated. Dave takes over and – without a single crisis in foreign affairs or at home to test him – finds that the boy scout code is quite sufficient to run the Oval Office with decency.

The second myth of *Dave* – and here the roots are precisely historical, from Alexander the Great to Henry V to John F. Kennedy – is the importance of dying young. Always leave them wanting more, as the old hands of vaudeville said. The third myth – and the one which makes *Dave* unmistakably a film of the Clinton era – is played out in the final reel. Having been in the White House, having slain a dragon or two and rescued his damsel in distress, Dave finds that he likes the power game. Having 'died' as president, he is reborn to run as a political candidate in his own right. To judge by the final shots, the women's vote and the black vote are on his side. A new Bill Clinton is among us.

Dave is both a morality and a fairy tale, a comforting fable that reassures us that the wicked are undone by their own cleverness and the innocent saved by their goodness. In this, it reverts to a Hollywood tradition of presenting the American political system as inherently good as long as it's in the hands of plain and decent folk. Frank Capra's 1939 classic *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* is the archetype, but since Watergate the tradition has been in disrepair. Indeed, the rot set in earlier, with the release of Robert Redford's *The Candidate* (1972) – a film whose theme was that the political process was so foul that it perverted even the most honest politician – the year before the scandal broke.

In the 90s, something has shifted in the zeitgeist. It may not be that we are ready again for innocence, but rather that we are ready, simply, to believe again. This act of will to believe is at the core of what may be the first film of the Clinton era. *Sommersby* – the story of a man who returns from the American Civil War to resume an identity, a home and a wife that may not be his – has a moment of extraordinary poignancy. "So who do you think I am?", asks Richard Gere of Jodie Foster. "Jack Sommersby", she replies. It is a statement of childlike faith and readiness to believe. Looking at times uncannily like Hillary Clinton, Foster re-enacts the great personal drama of last year's presidential campaign, when the wife of the president-to-be similarly stood by her man when his credibility was publicly challenged. By far the stronger character in the film – just as Hillary often seems the stronger partner in the presidential marriage – Foster builds a conjugal fortress on that simple moment of credulity.

It may be early to talk of a Clinton era for Hollywood, since films made during his presi-

dency have yet to be released. But since Hollywood acts as the barometer of our global culture, a shift in the myth factory's preconceptions about political power and the inviolability of marriage is a fair sign that mass culture is moving the same way.

The change from the 80s is already pronounced. For the Reagan-Thatcher era, Hollywood girded its loins and went to war with as much patriotic enthusiasm and profit as it had in the 40s. *Star Wars* (1977) gave us a foretaste of the battle against the evil empire, and Reagan returned the compliment with a Strategic Defence Initiative that adopted both technology and title from the Hollywood effort. *Top Gun* (1986) gave the technological edge and the guarantee that the free and restless spirit of a loyal young America would vanquish the overdrilled automatons of the Red Air Force. Then Sylvester Stallone, whether as Rocky against the Big Bad Red in the boxing ring or as Rambo, gave the Reagan years the satisfaction of Commie-stomping that the west never managed on the battlefield but finally won on the economic front. As if to signal the end of an era, Stallone's latest film *Cliffhanger* has Rambo transformed into an eco-sensitive hero of a Mountain Rescue team, with enemies who are British, including a football enthusiast who has turned soccer into an ingenious form of torture. This would never have happened in Mrs Thatcher's day.

But something even more fundamental is under way – as the exquisite self-referentiality of the latest Arnold Schwarzenegger film, *Last Action Hero*, indicates. Schwarzenegger, it will be recalled, was honorary Secretary for Pectorals in the Reagan-Bush cabinets and consultant to the Presidential Task Force on Physical Fitness. He was even recruited to the Bush election campaign, where he was wheeled out to recite his Terminator line – "Hasta la vista, baby" – to Bush's presumptuous challengers.

In *Last Action Hero*, things have definitely changed. Danny, a fatherless 13-year-old, is magically transported from the audience into the film-within-a-film that stars his superhero. At one point, he scribbles a naughty word and asks Schwarzenegger to read it aloud. Our hero declines. "You can't possibly say it," exclaims the boy, "because this movie is PG-13." PG-13 (parental guidance recommended for children below the age of 13, though they can still attend unaccompanied by adults) is the new Hollywood watchword. It seems the accountants have woken up at last to the fact that the blood and glory of the Reagan era didn't pay the bills. According to a recent survey by Paul Kagan Associates, between 1984 and 1991 PG-rated films were twice as likely to make \$60 million and three times as likely to make \$100 million as their R-rated rivals. (R here stands not for Reagan, but for Restricted to 17-year-olds or older unless accompanied by an adult.) Of the ten most profitable Hollywood films of the last three years, only the fourth (*Terminator 2*) and ninth (*Lethal Weapon 3*) were rated R. The top three were *Home Alone*, *Ghost* and *Aladdin*.

Tom Pollock of Universal Pictures, who claims proudly that "we are gearing ourselves toward younger movies," has noticed that Bill and Hillary Clinton and their just-turned-13-

year-old daughter Chelsea are now the typical target family of America. The fat bulge of the baby-boomers' children is passing slowly through the demographic snake, and Hollywood is scrambling to release family movies to catch them. Like the Clintons, the baby-boomers are less concerned about extra-marital sex and more attentive to their health insurance and the quality of America their children will inherit – what Mrs Clinton has identified with her calls for "a politics of meaning".

The Cold War is over, and America now looks inward. The most immediate threats are crime and the racial tensions that underlie the suburban family's fear of violence. Hollywood has an answer for these too, in Whoopi Goldberg's *Made in America*. Goldberg runs a black-consciousness bookshop, and through her college-bound daughter's efforts to find her sperm-bank father eventually meets the donor, a white Californian cowboy car dealer. Through the miracle of parenting, racial tensions are erased and Whoopi and the cowboy fall in love. It is not love that conquers all, but family.

Parenting is also at the heart of *Jurassic Park*, which in spite of devoured actors and severed limbs retains a PG-13 rating. The dinosaurs are undoubtedly magical, even though they lack that moment of human tenderness as the monster cups Fay Wray which has made *King Kong* the most enduring movie of its kind. The tenderness in *Jurassic Park* comes from the sub-plot, from the dinosaur expert who refuses to have



Innocents abroad: Kevin Kline and Sigourney Weaver, at home, in *'Dave'*, opposite; James Stewart plain and decent in Frank Capra's 1939 archetype *'Mr Smith Goes to Washington'*, above

children until his protective instincts are awakened by the need to save two youngsters. In what looks like becoming the archetypal ending of Clinton era films, our hero and heroine ride off into the sunset with the hero cuddling the sleeping young.

So the nice and nurturing 90s are characterised by innocence, readiness to believe and playing to the family audience. The evil-empire 80s brought us firepower and free-market capitalism as an ideological crusade (*Wall Street*) and as the glorious force that can set you free (witness the millionaire's saving of the prostitute in *Pretty Woman*). The sceptical 70s gave us a profound disbelief in politicians and the American way. Most of this scepticism came from America's defeat in Vietnam and from Watergate, but some of its spicier flavouring came from the constant drip of revelations about the real life of the Lost Prince, President Kennedy. Which brings us to the last time America felt genuinely good about itself, with prosperity and promise undimmed. It is the Kennedy years that remain the point of departure for Hol- ►

◀ lywood's role as teacher of national history and custodian of the national myth.

Over the last year Hollywood has delivered three very different films about the Kennedy era, all of which studiously avoid mention of revelations of marital infidelity, Mafia molls and plots to rub out Fidel Castro. By far the most intelligent is *Love Field*, named after the Dallas airport at which Kennedy landed on the day of his assassination. Starring Michelle Pfeiffer as an unhappy Dallas housewife who adores her president and determines to drive to Washington for his funeral, *Love Field* was perhaps the first swallow of Hollywood's new summer. Like Goldberg, Pfeiffer is drawn into a cross-racial affair, this time through the black child her father is trying to rescue from an institution. Long before the romance begins, she has a line which captures the patronising tone that underlay Kennedy's civil rights policy: surely a black man must revere the president, because "he has done a lot for your people."

Matinee – set in the Florida Keys, just across the water from Cuba, as Kennedy's 1962 missile unfolds – is much more fun. The splendidly preposterous plot stars an old-style cinema screening a classic horror movie with monstrous mutated ants, while the real horror looms in the nuclear dread offshore. A vehicle for the genial John Goodman, better known as Roseanne's screen husband, *Matinee* also strikes the parenting chord through the son of one of the US Coastguards at sea for the emergency.



Kennedy mania: Michelle Pfeiffer as the JFK-adoring Dallas housewife in 'Love Field', an early sign of the direction of the new Hollywood, with its appeal to the president's goodness

These were the songs of innocence, with their brash confidence, huge, finned cars and bouffant hair-dos. Oliver Stone's *JFK* showed how it was all stubbed out by a conspiracy which killed the president and stole America's childhood. And the end of childhood equals the end of family too, as Kevin Costner, the heroic District Attorney, abandons his parenting role, leaving his family to their ritual Easter lunch to go and do battle with evil.

Now the wheel has come full circle. The icon of last year's presidential campaign was that celebrated photograph of the young Clinton shaking hands with Kennedy on the White House lawn. The symbolism was explicit: the hands were publicly laid on and the torch was seen to be passed from the Lost Prince to the standard bearer of the new generation of baby-boomers. Clinton was Kennedy's true heir: the man who would bring back that American innocence and the readiness to believe that underpinned it. He would bring back the childhood of the baby-boomers who had lived through Vietnam and Watergate and Star Wars

and Iran-Contra, Clinton's contemporaries who were now grappling to make amends for their own tumultuous youth by taking their parenting seriously.

For the 30 years since Kennedy's time, Hollywood has helped define the long psychosis of the modern American experience. It has orchestrated the historical memory of the Clinton generation and been an unerring guide to its enthusiasms, dislikes, fears and moods. Clinton himself is a devout movie fan, who spent election day curled up on the sofa with his wife and daughter watching an old John Wayne film on television. Clinton was so attuned to Hollywood's messages, had read its signals of a shift in the *zeitgeist* with such precise intuition, that his own dangerous fascination with movie culture should have been predicted. The trouble was that the people closest to him, who might have warned of its dangers, were similarly star-struck.

This brings us back to *Dave* – a film of striking importance to the early months of the Clinton presidency. But it was not the public identification of Hollywood with the Clinton administration that sent the Friends of Bill flocking to see *Dave*. Nor was it the seductive miracle of the plot, which fed the fancy that their Arkansas champion was a Dave at heart. It was Ruth.

Ruth Goldway made her Hollywood debut with *Dave*. In the entire movie she has only three words – "Thankyou, Mr President", after the cabinet meeting where she also offers a smile, a snort and a presence as the only woman in the administration. Slim, stylish and 40-something but looking younger, Ruth Goldway is known to the remnants of the American left as the radical mayor of the Los Angeles suburb by the sea that was known, for all too brief a time, as the Peoples' Republic of Santa Monica. The results of her stormy tenure can still be enjoyed: an agreeable pedestrian precinct that gives the place a vital downtown worthy of the name, some radical bookshops and enviably decent public services.

Ruth married Derek Shearer, and thus became a genuine Friend of Bill. Derek is almost family: his sister, Brook Shearer (now on Hillary's White House staff) married Strobe Talbott, Clinton's Oxford room-mate, who is currently ambassador-at-large to the former Soviet Republics. Derek was one of the key figures of the Clinton campaign, in-house intellectual and economic adviser, certified FoB and bookaholic with the job of picking Clinton's reading list, from policy tomes to thrillers.

He first met Clinton 24 years ago, when Derek visited Oxford on vacation from a strenuous stint running the Yale student body at a time when this also meant helping to organise the campaign against the Vietnam war. The combination of an anti-Vietnam record, Ruth, and a consistent social democratic tone to his writings made Derek the *Wall Street Journal's* prime target as the Red under the bed of the Clinton campaign.

Unwise, therefore, to appoint him to an administration post that would require Senate confirmation and the public inquisition this involves. So Derek was tucked away into the

Commerce Department, with a private mission to turn it into an American MITI, that Japanese ministry credited with crafting the economic miracle. To see Ruth in the cabinet, if only on celluloid, represented one of the might-have-beens for the more radical Friends of Bill. But the movie was haunting for other reasons, hitting the screens just as the president ended the briefest honeymoon in history and began his dizzying plunge in the opinion polls.

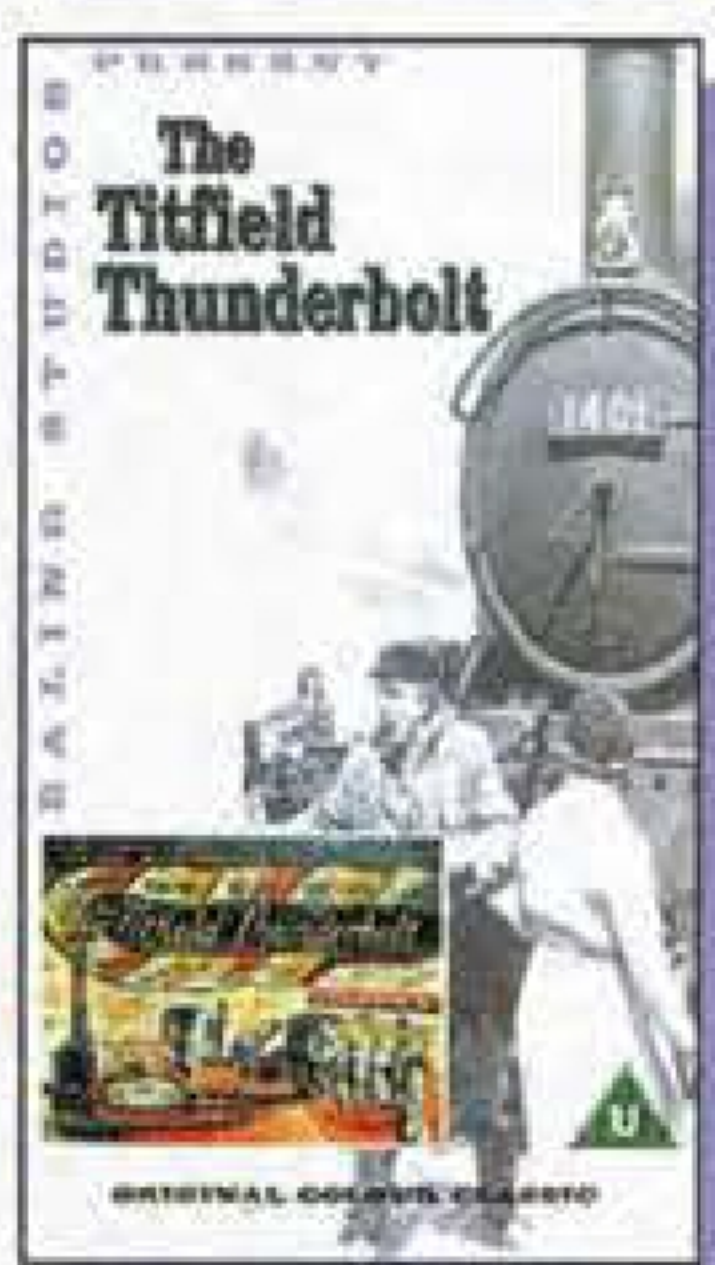
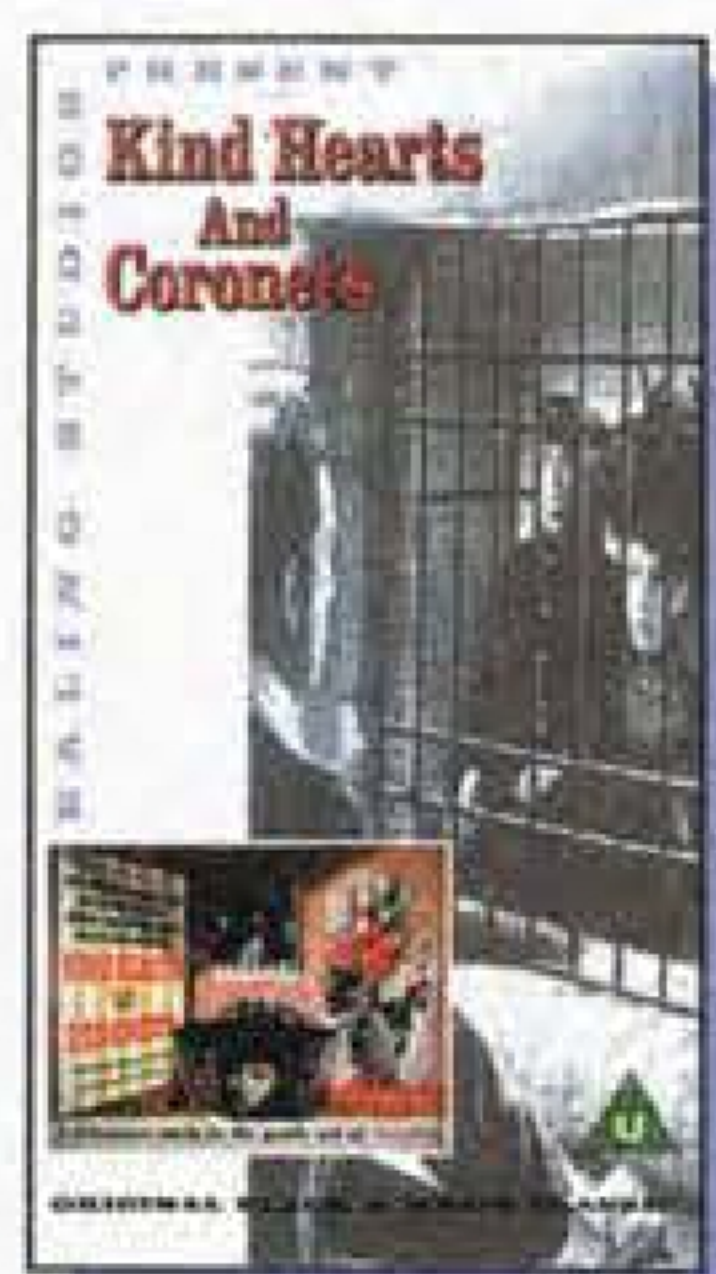
Hollywood, said the conventional wisdom, was to blame. The conservative columnist George F. Will, in a waspish piece about the youth of the White House staff, chose a Hollywood metaphor to dub the place "Home Alone". Given the way deputy chief of staff Mark Gearen records visiting celebrities on video and airline pilots announce their descent to Washington airport as an arrival at "Hollywood East", Will perhaps has a point. Indeed, it sometimes seems as if the entire entertainment industry has taken up White House residency: Barbra Streisand has spent the night; Liza Minelli was invited as a guest of Hillary; Paul McCartney has been invited to give a private performance in the East Room; and an after-dinner session with Boris Yeltsin at the Vancouver summit was passed over in favour of a chat with *Basic Instinct* star Sharon Stone.

The Kennedy White House had its own Hollywood connections, but balanced Marilyn Monroe and Peter Lawford and Frank Sinatra and the Rat-Pack with classical music recitals by cellist Pablo Casals. Reagan had even closer friends in Hollywood, but his own movie credits and credentials spared him that starry-eyed look the Clintons seem to have when Hollywood comes to call. Of course, Bill Clinton is not a natural Hollywood man; he is a natural member of the audience. But even before he began his presidential race, he had friends everywhere, including, of course, the Bloodworth-Thomasons.

An Arkansas couple who made it big as producers of the successful television series *Designing Women* and *Evening Shade*, Harry Thomason and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason rallied Hollywood to raise money for the Clinton campaign, lent Bill and Hillary their new house on the California beach, and made the hit bio-pic of Clinton for the Democratic convention, *The Man From Hope*. They were the ones who ransacked the film archives to track down the Kennedy handshake.

Harry Thomason and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason have taken the flack for their introduction of Clinton to their Hollywood hairdresser Cristophe and for their re-make of Hillary's clothes and hairstyles – for their bewitchment of Clinton. They have now retired from the scene, plotting a new television series about the real Washington. Derek Shearer has retired too, leaving Washington to go home and nurse Ruth through an illness which struck just as *Dave* was premiered. For the baby-boomer generation, whose experiences and values Derek embodied more than anyone else around Clinton, the family comes first. Hollywood, in its new incarnation, would have to approve. Bill and Hillary Clinton certainly did. *'Dave' opens on 5 November*

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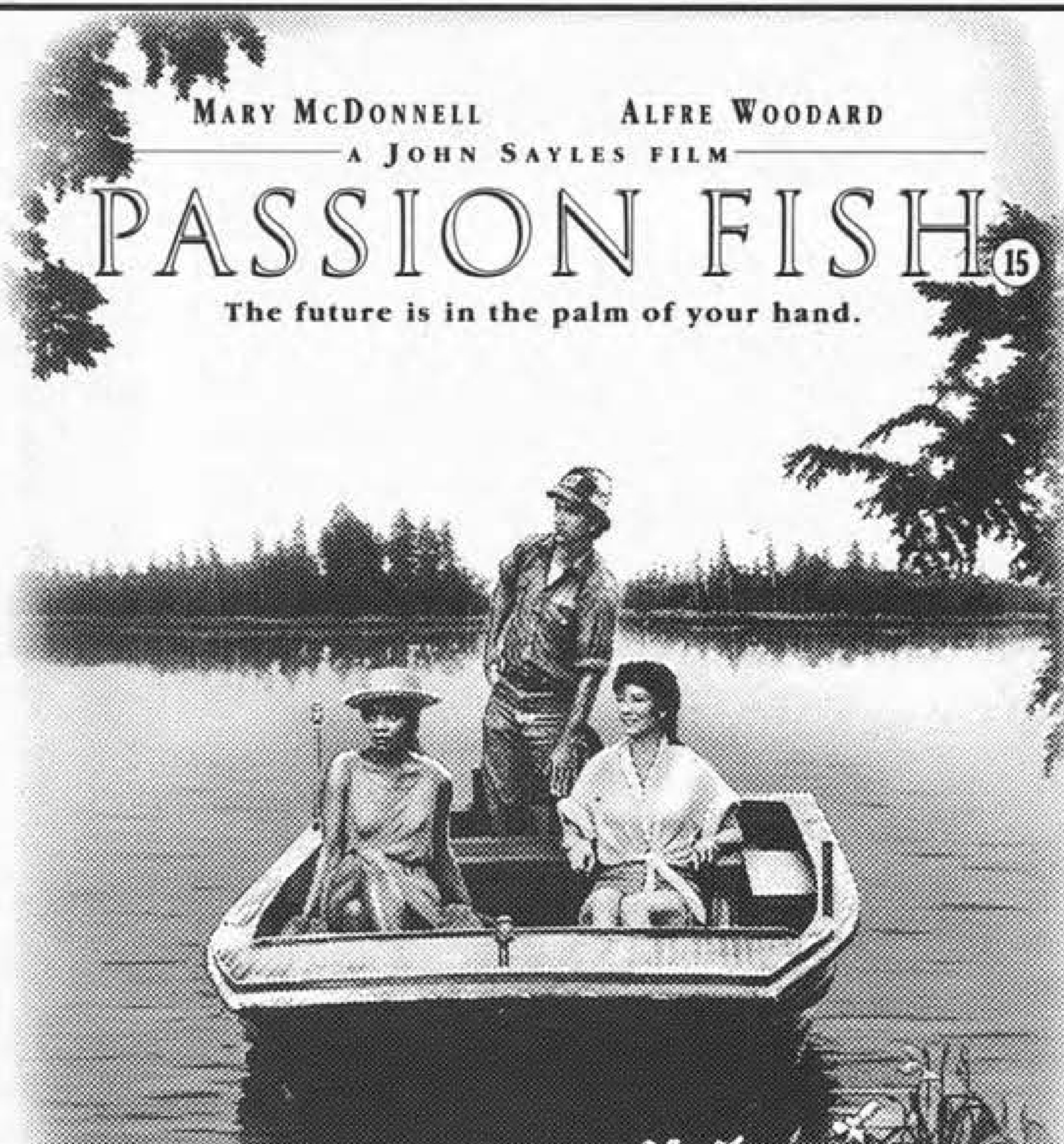
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Compared with Olivier, Branagh doesn’t seem theatrical at all. In fact, he says he dislikes all those things which others see as the essence of drama: exaggeration, artifice, strangeness, distance. In his latest Shakespeare film, *Much Ado About Nothing*, he didn’t want actors declaiming in fluty, stage voices. Hence a cast that includes film and television folk who have never touched the Bard before. Instant accessibility, explicitness and lack of pretension – these are what he reckons counts.

Of course, each successive generation of stage actors in Britain this century has had its popular modernisers. From Gerald du Maurier, whose languid underplaying made late-Victorian histrionics seem fustian, to Olivier himself, who was accused in 1935 of playing Romeo

Equally at home in Hollywood as with the classics, Kenneth Branagh speaks for modern middle England. By Alison Light

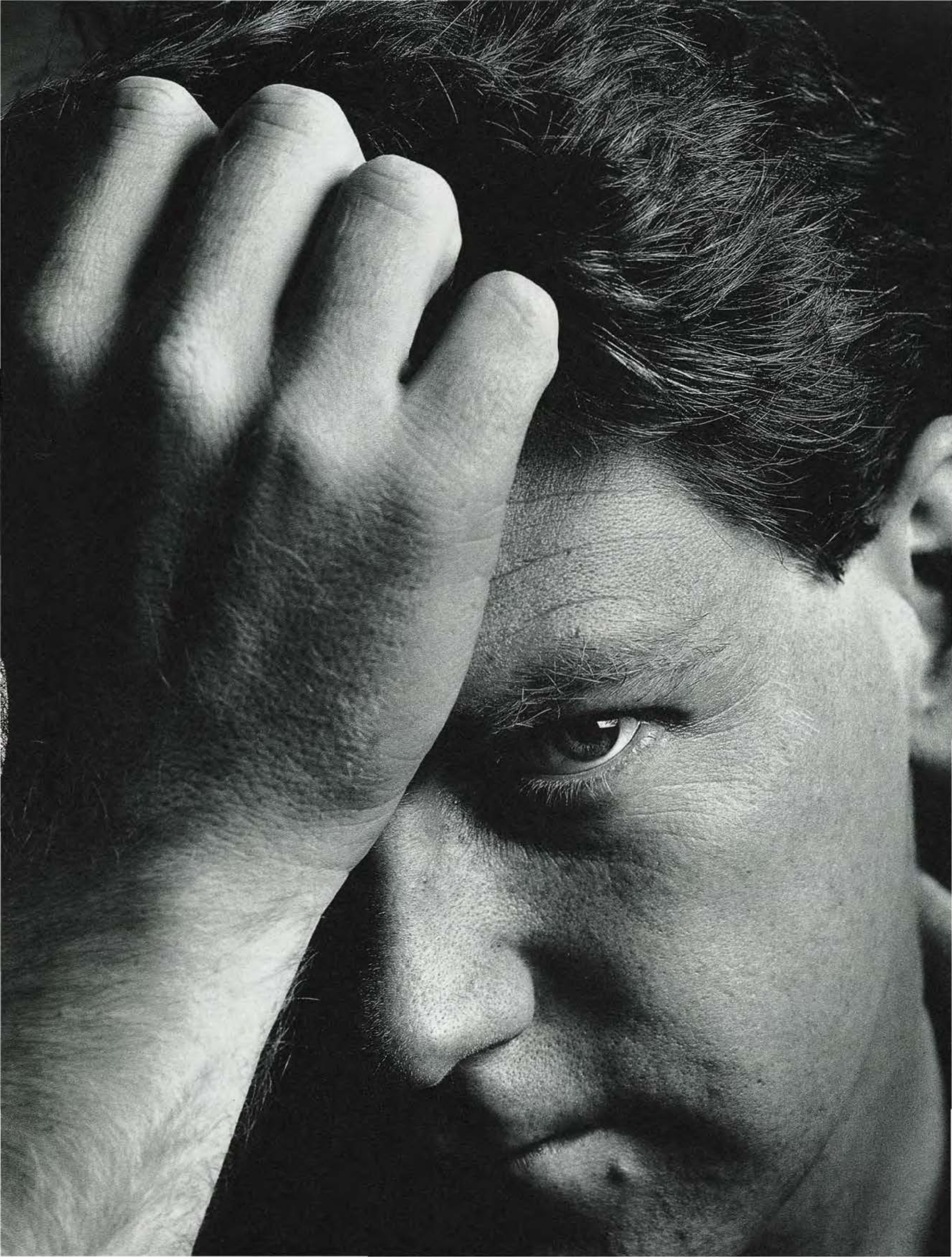
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ORDINARY



as though he were riding a motorbike. Olivier’s performance owed much to the movies, and to the West End, where he had already acted before his classical career took off. Yet what once seemed direct and immediate in him can now look forced and extravagant.

Branagh’s naturalism is also a style and a product of its times. If Branagh’s blokeishness is central to his success, it owes a lot to a mixing of the media and to the two-way influence on the stage tradition not only of film, but especially of television, altering the rules of what seems natural. From the outset Branagh, like most of his generation, has combined his stage work with television drama and film for TV. He became known nationally not for his Stratford Henry V, but for his television performance as Guy Pringle in a BBC adaptation of Olivia Manning’s *Balkan Trilogy*. While he is capable of the clarion voice and high-decibel performance, ►

No more kings: Laurence Olivier, with his aristocratic hauteur, left; Kenneth Branagh, with his engaging blokeishness, right



◀ he is equally, and more frequently, at home with the low-key projection and intimate gesture associated with the camera. His own directing relies heavily upon the close-up rather than the more spectacular or epic possibilities of film.

It's as though Branagh has no style of his own, or rather a pick-and-mix repertoire which is his style. As much a fan of Burt Lancaster and Spencer Tracy as of Michael Redgrave and Olivier, the friendly anonymity of his image summons up half-echoes of other styles in his performance. His stocky, grimacing Henry V, erupting into violence in the manhandling of the conspirators at the beginning of the action, had touches of the tough guys of 40s movies as well as of television police series. *Public Enemy*, the play he wrote to launch his Renaissance Theatre Company, borrowed its title from a Cagney movie and was an anxious parable about a Belfast Walter Mitty (played by Branagh) obsessed with screen images and constantly play-acting the gangster.

It's as a cheerful – some would say unthinking – assimilator and adaptor that Branagh has irritated his critics and pleased his admirers. He is a child of his times in finding American popular culture – especially as seen on television – as familiar and appealing as British, and in not opposing Hollywood to Shakespeare, but seeing them equally as 'classics'. After making *Henry V*, Branagh took on Hitchcock in his second feature, *Dead Again*, with a sense of relishing another, equally powerful cultural icon. The movie, a deliberate pastiche of noirish styles and film-buff references, allowed Branagh to enjoy more impersonations: as a 40s Anton Walbrook, melodramatically foreign, and a laid-back LA private eye.

Branagh's public commitment to a "life-enhancing populism" is premised on just this moving between high and low. But his version of both is always old fashioned. He believes in 'the arts' (his English teacher at school was a major influence) and in the extension of sensibility offered by the 'great traditions' of literature (his next film project is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*). He persists, like many an autodidact who hasn't been to university or film school (and like an older generation of working-class students), in celebrating the potential for self-discovery in Shakespeare or in the classics. Exactly the kind of humanism, dependent upon a universalising empathy and a desire to see Elizabethan people as 'just like us', which left-wing intellectuals have abandoned or suspect as inherently reactionary.

The new royals

The humanism makes, though, a democratic appeal to social aspirations – anyone can learn, anyone can get access, anyone can make a movie. Unlike others who have had the desire to popularise Shakespeare (be it Beerbohm Tree in 1896 or Olivier himself), Branagh identifies with his audience, and with a lack of cultural privilege. He is less evangelical than ecumenical in his treatment of high culture. At best, his outlook, which comes through in his autobiography *Beginning*, is that culture is ordinary: it doesn't belong to anyone, let alone to the edu-



Faces of Kenneth: as Henry V, top; as a 40s private eye in 'Dead Again', above; with Emma Thompson in 'Much Ado About Nothing', opposite

cated. He attributes this to growing up in working-class Belfast and taking his parents, neither of whom stayed on at school, as his standard. Branagh included flashbacks to the earlier history plays in his *Henry V* because he assumed that his audience would have no prior knowledge. When more lofty critics such as Colin MacCabe accused him of historical ignorance, they rather missed the point.

To an older left, what is infuriating about Branagh is that he doesn't make anything oppositional from this breaking down of cultural barriers. He has challenged authorities without being anti-authoritarian, leaving the RSC, for instance, not to go into the fringe or 'alternative' film but to set up his own mainstream company. If he's not reverential towards older cultural forms, he certainly is respectful. His *Henry V* was a revision of Olivier's, but it wasn't trying to do battle with the father figure. His remakes are not new definitive classics but just versions, happy to inherit the mantle of cultural worth without questioning its validity.

For those in the middle classes brought up on that streak of puritanism which thinks that anything culturally serious must be painful, Branagh's approach is trivialising. But it depends on where you're coming from. To those who wouldn't usually go near a theatre, Branagh might seem intensely serious in even bothering with this stuff. What looks like vulgarity and mediocrity (both repeated insults in the repertoire of Branagh-bashers) to someone bookish or expert in film may feel like an entry into high culture to someone else.

Branagh's humanism, combined with the go-getting energy of his fundraising, can sit comfortably with the more aggressive forms of international capital and a nostalgia for something culturally impressive but socially reassuring. This is partly the effect of evoking Olivier. Branagh seems at ease in his role as ambassador for British cinema, and with Prince Charles behind him and Emma Thompson at his side (with whom Branagh makes a new 'royal couple'), he has been well and truly welcomed into the ranks of the great and the good.

But what about his appeal to the under 30s or under 20s? Both the nostalgia for Olivier and the search for a particular brand of left-wing politics belong ultimately to older, more middle-aged folk. If Branagh is no more simply a man of the people than he is a Thatcherite entrepreneur (though there may be something of both in his make-up), is it not this lack of distinguishing features and mingling of old identities that make him a new kind of symbol? If his likeability depends upon a blurring of cultural belongings, doesn't this provide a different kind of space for a young, white middle England? A space which can be either an evasion or an opening up. Or both.

The British – and especially the English – have done a good line in middle-brow ordinarieness before now. The inter-war image of the little man muddling through – Robert Donat as Mr Chips? – or the decent chap of the 40s and 50s taking it on the chin (John Mills or Richard Attenborough?), for instance. But these, like the post-war rebel looking for room at the top or running long distances on his own, relied upon

the strong charge of class or region or masculinity to give them typicality.

By comparison, Kenneth Branagh's relationship to identity is oblique. It seems not to be located in a powerful sense of national, social or sexual difference. It is ironic that our latest mouthpiece for British film should have a weak historical sense of nation (and certainly not a Thatcherite one). Where Olivier's Henry was a nationalist answer to the 'Americanisation' of British culture as well as a comfort in time of war, Branagh's low-budget version noticeably played down patriotism. The muddy field at Shepperton evoked the trenches and chaos of the First World War rather than the spirit of D-Day. Where Olivier was resolute and poised, Branagh played a troubled king with more than a touch of Hamlet. Olivier made his French opponents effete and effeminate; Branagh swapped lines around to give them gravitas. It may have been historically wrong-headed, but it mitigated against the uncomplicated Englishness of Olivier's call to arms.

Perhaps Branagh's Irish upbringing led him to make his Henry regional (restoring the king's Welshness, which Olivier cut), but he hasn't made a platform of his Irishness either. Nor has he made much ado about coming from the working classes. Unlike the proletarian new wave of actors in the 60s – Albert Finney, Tom Courtenay – Branagh is not defined by his accent, but by his lack of it. Though he calls himself a "short-assed, fat-faced Irishman", he is more than a little nervous in his autobiography about the nature of his masculinity.

From Ulster to Reading

Where Olivier maintained that he could be feminine or masculine but never "neuter", a strenuous neutrality seems part of Branagh's boyishness. He can do 'butch' when he has to, and there's plenty of male bonding in his films, but jittery comments about mascara and tights at RADA suggest he's more likely to make Brian Blessed a bosom pal than Ian McKellen. He has been new-mannish enough to marry a feminist, but old fashioned enough to get married in the first place. Still, if Ken and Emma seem resoundingly straight, their colourlessness is partly an immunity from overt misogyny. The erotic power of more glamorous husband-and-wife teams – Olivier and Vivien Leigh, Richard Burton and Liz Taylor – usually depicted the female half as hysteric. Thompson has yet to be exposed as either 'neurotic' or a 'maneater'. The mind boggles, though, at the thought of Thompson's Cleopatra to Branagh's Antony: Shakespeare meets safer sex?

Perhaps what Branagh's image keys into is a sense of absence within the heart of England. One complaint about his third feature film *Peter's Friends* was that unlike the 30-something saga, *The Big Chill*, which it recast, its group of college mates didn't have much of a 'background' to explore. No culture or politics, no society in common. But it's not that Branagh needed to be older. Surely the point is that this lack of a dominant narrative is also a representative feeling? Those born, like him, in 1960 may not have experienced demos or sit-ins, or even an old-boy network, but that's their privi-

lege, and their distinctive difference from some of their critics.

What cultural theorists have identified as 'post-modern' shifts in the relationship to culture and to its production are not confined to the metropolis. They have their effects in the home counties and suburbs too, inside the mainstream institutions of English culture as well as on its margins. If Branagh speaks to middle England, it may be precisely the refusal of origins, of authenticity and of essential identity that wins him an audience. Where other white Britons, notably male ones, have represented the long journey from an older community into the present as a diaspora, a sense of exile and longing for home (one thinks of Terence Davies' recent films), Branagh's move from Ulster to Reading comprehensive seems to need other tools of explanation. *Beginning* had a different take on social mobility and class, one that didn't map the familiar territory of separation and alienation. Is Branagh mistaken, or more representative of some of his generation in feeling neither much nostalgia nor anger?

The politics of Branagh's appeal could be read in a number of ways. It might suggest a white middle-class England wanting to free itself from older forms of identification. It could remind us that, like the theatre, such an England – in the villages, the suburbs and the dormitory towns, as well as in the city – was always the site of intense mobility, of enormous diversity, of heterogeneous histories which all, like that of the Reading Irish, need their own attention. Or it might seem more at one with the conservatism that retreats from such a recognition into a bland, meritocratic decency and accessible classlessness, what Stuart Hall has called the "low-powered motor" of Majorism. The question is also how far these old polarising habits of thinking – conservatism vs radicalism, high culture vs popular – can take us in understanding and discriminating between new forms of cultural hybridity?

As far as the Kenneth Branagh phenomenon goes, his latest effort, *Much Ado About Nothing*, doesn't bode well. With a transatlantic cast breezily mingling accents – Denzel Washington fresh from playing Malcolm X rubbing shoulders with Richard Briers, better known for British television sitcoms – this motley crew of



old friends and newcomers gives us post-modern Shakespeare without tears. The original urban and indoor Messina is replaced by an open-air Tuscany: Chianti country (as Anne Barton innocently called it in the *New York Review of Books*) – anybody's idea of instantly recognisable consumer Italy. Without any reference to period (the costumes hint at a vague eighteenth century?), Branagh has certainly confirmed a move away from Shakespeare as the source of nationalist myth-making. Instead we have Shakespeare as a never-never land of the eternal present or mixed into a kind of Euromulch. When Branagh told *American Film* "I want people to feel that *Henry V* is of the same world as *Batman* – that it, too, is 1989," at least he was relating it directly to the present. *Much Ado* is only recognisably of its time by scrupulously avoiding any direct topical relevance.

Communal romping

Much Ado in Branagh's version is a pure romance, not a comedy. Humour, as Freud argued, depends on releasing tension – tension which comes from social discomfort. But in removing any sense of a divided, historical society, Branagh (as Shakespeare never does) makes the mood continually sunny. Repeatedly the production notes tell us how much fun it was for everyone. And Branagh's fantasy of a good world seems to be one big happy household, an extended family, which includes the people of the past too. The film opens and closes with an image of communal romping as innocent as it is embarrassing in its naivety. It is dominated by the choice of filming out of doors (to include cheery servants and laundry maids aplenty) and makes little sense of the enclosed, authoritarian patriarchy which causes all the fuss about virginity, and gives the play its name.

Gathering a family of friends around you – that "happy, happy few" – and temporarily sinking your differences is *not* the same as creating an ensemble performance which can communicate the making of collectivity from (and to) a group of former strangers. And while the 'crack' was no doubt good up at Mona Lisa's villa, this viewer, at least, felt distinctly excluded from the frolics. With only the slightest bit of jaundice, the memory of watching *Much Ado* is like that of a gruelling family Christmas, where if the music was loud enough, and you ate till you dropped, you could believe you were having fun.

Will Branagh be hoist with his own petard? The desire to recreate "family feeling", which he honours from his Belfast childhood as the inspiration for setting up the Renaissance Theatre Company, may prove too conservative a loyalty. Families are notoriously the places where warmth, affection and co-operation are based on effacing the differences between members rather than recognising them. And someone is usually in charge. A therapist might say that Kenneth Branagh needs to leave home. To stop pleasing his parents (whom he has tried so hard to take with him) even if it means talking about religion, sex or politics at the dinner table. It can't be all cakes and ale.

'Much Ado About Nothing' opens on 27 August and is reviewed on page 50 of this issue

Karen Alexander introduces Julie Dash. Below, the director reflects on images from her film DAUGHTERS OF THE DUST

Two UK releases this year – Leslie Harris' *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* and Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* – have challenged popular misconceptions about black cinema. Their respective distributors vied for the claim of 'first feature by an African-American woman to gain national distribution', and though Dash's film won that race, both movies speak loudly against the new black male hegemony of the HipHop or YoHo school. Leslie Harris fits the urban contemporary mould better, and her challenge to it is simpler, pushing the boys aside to produce the first HipHop film where black women are not merely sexual side-shows or threats to black manhood. The difference

Julie Dash makes in *Daughters of the Dust* is deeper, if harder to define, a difficulty unwellcome to journalists fond of cocktails like the "Godard meets HipHop" tag applied to *I.R.T.*

Daughters of the Dust is set in the islands off the South Carolina coast at the turn of the century, where a Gullah family meets for a 'last supper' before most of its members leave for a new life on the mainland. The film is a tale of rootedness and migration, of a family's coming together and its dissolution – and women, as bearers of their culture's African heritage, are the focus of the dramas that unfold.

The matriarchal Nana Peasant uses spiritual means in her struggle to hold on to her depart-

ing family. Her rival for spiritual control is Haagar – a member of the Peazants by marriage who is leading the move north, away from the traditions and beliefs of the family's African past. Nana Peasant's granddaughter Eula is pregnant after being raped by a white landowner; her husband Eli is alienated from his wife because he believes that the child she is carrying is fathered by the white rapist. Nana's spiritual power is affirmed when she reconciles Eula and Eli through a ritual of communion with the family's ancestors, in which Eli is assured of his paternity of the unborn child. Meanwhile, Yellow Mary, who has returned to the islands with her lover Trula



The photographer Mr Snead represents the mainland, the future, science, technology and magic. I'm always amazed that no one asks "Why is he using a flash in daylight?" He makes the smoke part of the spectacle, a puffy white cloud to match those in the sky. The Chinese-style parasol the children are sitting in front of has been washed up on the

beach and symbolises the flotsam and jetsam washed up from the mainland. The islanders may be isolated, but they are still influenced by objects from beyond. This shot starts out at normal speed then goes into slow motion, so when Snead snaps a picture, the puff from the flash is exaggerated and becomes like a memory.



This is Mr Snead photographing the Peasant men on the beach. Through the lens he sees the Unborn Child posing next to her father, Eli, but when he looks at them without the lens he

can't see her. She allows him a glimpse of her to suggest that there are things beyond the worldly science he and the magic of his camera represent.



Yellow Mary, who has been away and knows from experience what awaits the Peazants on the mainland, kisses the talisman Nana Peasant has made – a Bible entwined with moss – to protect the family on their journey.

Yellow Mary has returned from a more sophisticated life, but she still drops to her knees and kisses the talisman in homage to its strength.



This is a Christian scene in a new context. A lot of African Americans became baptists when they reached the new world because baptism provided a camouflage for West African beliefs and religious practices,

such as the worship of water gods. These characters are less focused than the Peasant family, who know their beliefs and where they came from.

after both have worked in Cuba as prostitutes, is able to stake a claim for inclusion in the family's history. The film concludes with a ritual of spiritual regeneration designed by Nana Peazant to preserve the family from the dangers it will face in the cities of the north.

Daughters of the Dust is an extraordinarily seductive costume drama, on the surface far removed from the concern with contemporary urban life that has dominated the work of the latest wave of black film-makers. But we should remember that a costume drama – if viewed not simply as an excuse to dress up in Tuscany – is also a telling of history, and the retelling of history is a fundamental concern of almost all significant black cinema and culture. Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* and Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* could each be dismissed as a costume drama, but each is also a history lesson. The same is true of Lee's forthcoming *Crooklyn*, about growing up in Brooklyn in the 70s, and of Julien's *Young Soul Rebels*, set in London in

1977. In both cases, visualising the past provides a much-needed historical context for the situation of black people in the present.

In Dash's film, the costumes, hairstyles and customs depicted are a corrective history lesson in a culture where nineteenth-century black people are usually shown dressed according to the codes of *Gone with the Wind* and the like. Hiding or distorting black people's history has denied us images of them, and *Daughters* works powerfully to recover these from the past, at the same time introducing the cinema-going public to an all-but-lost black aesthetic.

Before *Daughters of the Dust*, Dash was best known for *Illusions*, a 40-minute drama set in 40s Hollywood and shot in glittering black and white. The film was acknowledged by Isaac Julien as an inspiration for *Looking for Langston*. Dash and Julien have both been accused of making films that are "too beautiful", as if a 'black aesthetic' mustn't be too 'aesthetic'. *Illusions* and *Daughters of the Dust* are part of Dash's

projected series of history pieces, each set at a pivotal moment in the lives of African-American women. The series is to end with a futuristic piece called *Bone, Ash and Rose*, set in 2050.

The Gullah people depicted in *Daughters of the Dust* are descendants of slaves who managed to survive on the sea islands and were able to retain close spiritual ties with the West African cultures from which they were stolen. The non-linear narrative evokes story-telling in the Griot manner of West African oral cultures, in which memories and objects are invested with meanings from which the story is woven: "The Griot will come to a birth, wedding or funeral and over a period of days will recount the family's history, with the stories going off at a tangent, weaving in and out," explains Dash. "I decided that *Daughters of the Dust* should be told in that way." This narrative structure evolved with the project: "Originally *Daughters of the Dust* was to be a silent film, but as American Playhouse became involved they insisted on ►



These are the hands of Daddy Mac holding a turtle inscribed with signs from the Kongo system of life and death. He is blessing the family before they eat. This symbols are

visual proof of the persistence of a language, cosmology and a world-view despite the confines of being an African captive into slavery.



The actor playing Eli, in a genuine trance, is gazing at a figurehead floating on the water. He is balancing on a thin little bridge we built in very deep water; we had him walk it through with scuba divers. The figurehead is a

mock-up taken from the prow of a slave ship. It had a terrible power. Before seeing it I had never realised how cruel it was to have a figurehead of an African warrior guiding a slave ship.



This is a flashback to an indigo-processing plant where the Unborn Child watches her ancestors at work. The colour, which is in the bow in her hair and on the hands of the ancestor, is my way of signifying slavery,

as opposed to whipmarks or scars, images which have lost their power. Processing the indigo plant was an African practice that became poisonous when transferred to the new world. The colour is a trace like a scar.



Young Nana, with dust on her hands, is questioning the fertility of the land in what we assume is a flashback. But the scene is really in the present: the whole film is a flash forward. It starts with the hands, then you flash forward to what she means by the hands. Then you come back to the present and the question she asks. Then you go back to the

future, and the rest of the story unfolds. The film starts out during the period of slavery. I dubbed the older woman's voice over the young actress, so when she says "How can we plant in this dust?", you recognise the old Nana Peazant. The dust is the past, and 'Daughters of the Dust' means the daughters of the past.

◀ dialogue, and as I expanded the dialogue, I introduced the Unborn Child as a character and a narrative voice. So the story has two points of view: that of a child who has not yet been born, and that of a great-grandmother who has seen it all and who can see the coming of the child in the future. I realised that the story had to be told in a non-western way."

Characters too reject western conventions. "If this story is told in a non-western way," says Dash, "then my characters cannot be motivated by the Greek archetypes that are the foundation of western drama. The Unborn Child, for instance, is Elegba: one foot in this world, one in the other. Although Elegba is usually male, I made him female because I figured that he has the power to be anyone in his role as mediator between the sacred and secular worlds."

The situation of this group of African-American women at the turn of one century resonates for African-American women at the turn of another, and we can measure the distance travelled over 100 years. There are also links and discrepancies across space, across the 'black Atlantic', between the roles assigned men and women in West African cultures and those assumed by the women Dash depicts. "In this new world, it is the women who have become the Griots of their culture, even though in the old world it was a male thing," says Dash. "White sociologists look at it and say 'It's a matriarchal society,' but there's more to it than that. It's as though in the desperate situation in which they found themselves, the women deliberately took on the role of oral historians, they took it upon themselves to be the ones who remember."

Critical responses to *Daughters of the Dust* picked up on the visual qualities of its cine-

Biography

Born in New York City in 1952, Julie Dash first studied film at workshops held at the Studio Museum of Harlem in 1968. She majored in psychology before being accepted on to a film studies programme at the Leonard Center for the Performing Arts at the David Picker Institute. After graduating in film from City College New York, she moved to Los Angeles to take up a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Film Studies at the American Film Institute, where her teachers included William

Friedkin, Jan Kadar and Slavko Vorkapich, then in his 90s. Dash's 'Four Women' (1978) shows the influence of Vorkapich's theories of montage and kinesthetic responses in cinema. Dash then attended UCLA film school, where she was taught by and worked with Charles Burnett (on 'My Brother's Wedding'). At UCLA she produced a short adaptation of Alice Walker's 'Diary of an African Nun' and her graduation piece was the award-winning drama 'Illusions' (1984), starring Lonette McKee. 'Daughters of the Dust' is Dash's first feature

but her 11th film. Her 20 years' experience in the independent sector set her apart from the new breed of black film-makers, where men in their late 20s miraculously lose six or seven years off their age to conform to the infant-prodigy stereotype. Among many current projects is another film set in the 40s – this time in Harrison, Georgia – for the German production company Cinavel. A longer-term project is one of a series of three Technicolor short films (the other two by Neema Barnett and Maureen Blackwood) to be produced in China. Julie Dash has a nine-year-old daughter.

matography, but the film is also highly literary – perhaps unsurprisingly, a novel derived from it is in the pipeline. Dash's preoccupation with non-linear narrative structure, memory and voices from the past or from other worlds echoes the themes of several contemporary African-American women writers. The film uses fragments of Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*, and other authors are an avowed influence. "It was the literature of black women in the early 70s that inspired me to become a film-maker of dramatic narratives," explains Dash. "Before that I made documentaries, but after reading Toni Cade Bambara, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, I wanted to tell those kinds of stories. I see myself as a disciple of black women writers. They made me whole."

Dash currently has a project to remake

Michel Deville's *La Lectrice*, substituting a black heroine absorbed by the classics of black literature. "This is something I can't get done in Hollywood. They love the project, but they say it's 'too literary'. I told them, 'Just because it's about literature doesn't make it literary.' And then they look at me with a blank stare."

The current wooing of Julie Dash by Hollywood producers will be an interesting test of the adaptability of the independent sector to the marketplace. But Dash's determination to continue to work in the formats and genres which suit her means that it will never be a matter of assimilation. What we can hope for instead is the exposure of a sophisticated black cinema aesthetic to wider audiences.

'Daughters of the Dust' opens on 17 September and is reviewed on page 43 of this issue



Flashing forward: an image from 'Daughters of the Dust', a film where the future haunts the scenes

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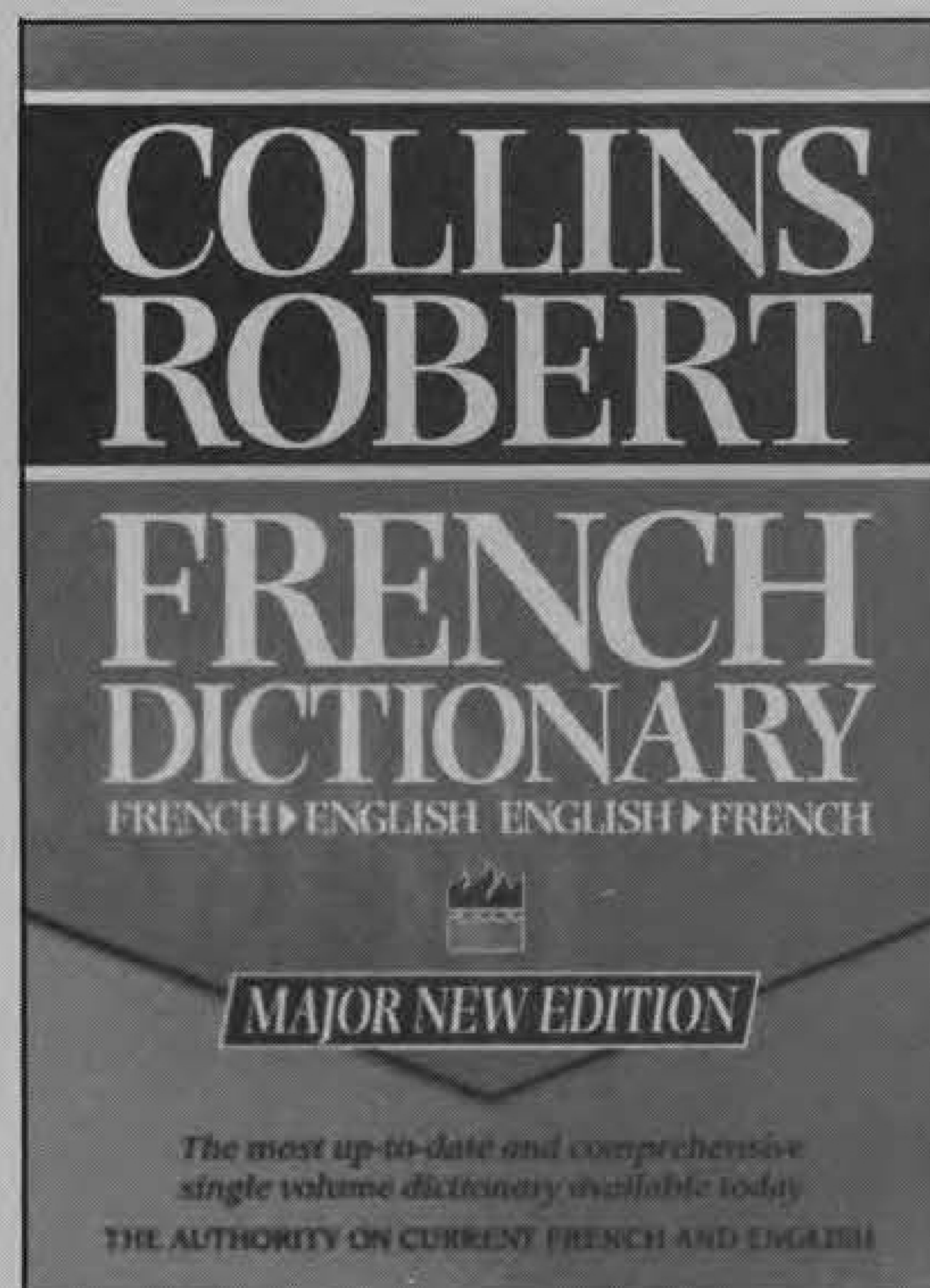
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**THE ESTABLISHED AUTHORITY ON
CURRENT FRENCH AND ENGLISH**

How is British national identity defined? And how do race and nation intersect? By Paul Gilroy

● What does the debate about political correctness mean in this country? Anyone puzzling over this question will have to consider the extraordinarily enthusiastic reception accorded Robert Hughes' recent book, *Culture of Complaint*. To be sure, his one-liners are carefully scripted and his polemic against the absurdities of contemporary political culture in the US is certainly slick, though its sniggering tone and the consistency of his aim at the softest of targets undermine it. However, Hughes' arguments against political correctness and in favour of arcane aesthetic values based on clearly definable notions of excellence are exclusively tailored to American habits. In Britain we can enjoy some of his jokes, but there must be doubt about the extent to which his more specific attacks on campus politics or arts funding translate into our very different social and cultural circumstances.

Here, the first shoots of multi-cultural television and the racial dogmatism of social workers are far more likely targets. It is not just the pattern of our institutions that is different. This country lacks a political language for making sense of its post-colonial and hetero-cultural condition. The absence of such a language is underlined in recent initiatives such as the BBC's document *Extending Choice*, which unsuccessfully links an affirmation of national heritage (the invariant repetition of long-established traditions) with some ritual genuflection towards the distant goal of a tolerant, plural society. The characteristic product of this strange mixture of concerns is an image of the nation as a cultural archipelago: a string of discrete locations on which dissimilar sovereign cultures can reproduce without any unwelcome intrusion from the neighbours. This vision of stable, rooted and predictable cultural life appeals to all sorts of conservatives. It is outmoded in an age of global production, consumption and communications, of refugees and migrants. Worst of all, it prevents the issue of inter-cultural and trans-cultural processes from being raised. In today's Britain, it is nothing more than a quiet endorsement of the damaging enthusiasm for particularity that Hughes unrelentingly attacks.

There are further differences between our situation and the Ameri-

can conditions that provoked Hughes into print. The link between cultures that exalt victimage and the real experiences of victimisation which make that exaltation a credible response to growing immiseration is certainly not as clear cut in this country as he argues it is in the US. He has little to say about the bleak material conditions in which these dismal responses to oppression become persuasive. His brand of acid provides neither cogent analysis nor emotional comfort in circumstances where both are urgently needed. Pouring abuse on feminism and black political activism will always raise a laugh, but it cheapens discussion of important issues and may trivialise and even undermine the more substantive versions of multi-culturalism that Hughes' book occasionally seeks to affirm.

This society suffers less than the US from the distrust of formal politics that Hughes connects to the rise of therapy as a surrogate for political action. It lacks the ideology and institutions of citizenship that make the notion of a unified polity credible and provide Hughes with an antidote to the damaging cult of diversity that is his principal object of scorn. The motto *e pluribus unum* acknowledges the possibility of pluralism in the moment of its negation. Britain has no equivalent melting-pot ideology to focus the possibility of cultural assimilation, no mass higher education system capable of staging the culture wars into which Hughes is a late-coming participant, and no corporate art world comparable to the American one in which the bogus pluralism he loathes has taken root.

Yes, we do have a few Afrocentric separatists and Islamic fundamentalists whose inconsistent assumptions about nation, culture and identity can readily be held up to ridicule, but there are equally dangerous and far more potent forms of cultural and ethnic absolutism that appear here at the very centre rather than the fringes of political life. These different absolutisms should not be weighed against each other because, though similar, they are not equivalent.

As Winston Churchill's recent speech and the enthusiastic popular response to it demonstrated, belief in the unchanging otherness of the racial minorities that menace national homogeneity and purity is an utterly respectable feature of our political culture. The issue of multi-culturalism has an altogether un-American flavour while the ethnic boundaries of the

national community are still being contested. The bedrock of know-nothing hostility and contempt for the outsiders who will probably always be seen as 'immigrants' remains largely intact. It has recently been supplemented by the dangerous idea that 'race' has become a taboo subject in our political life and the suggestion that the genuine fears of the majority are being stifled and ignored by the squeamish cosmopolitanism of the chattering classes who illegitimately control the content of the media.

If some 'ethnic' minorities reproduce that same reductive logic and its primordialist understanding of culture and identity in their own activities, so what? The fact that they incorporate this type of argument into the idiom with which they strive to answer the effects of racism and discrimination in their lives could even be interpreted as an index of their integration. Their voices testify to the power of a culture of compensation rather than any culture of complaint.

Some of the things that irk Hughes can be recognised close to home. However, he is by no means the first person to point out that opposed elements of the right and left can come to tacit agreements about the workings of nation, culture and identity or to observe that the oppositional consciousness produced in oppressed groups sometimes enshrines the role of the victim and places it at the centre of the essentially therapeutic activities that can get substituted for politics.

I'd like to think that it was Hughes' exemplary defence of *real* multi-culturalism rather than the tired neo-con posturing in which he has wrapped it that explains the popularity of his intervention. With that side of his work in mind, it becomes productive to ask why this country has lacked a defence of democratic cultural diversity – the type that would not readily collapse under the onslaught of particularities. The principled multi-culturalism that surfaces intermittently in his book has even fewer subscribers here than it does in the US. It is a combative formation, alert to the contingency of cultural values and equipped with an understanding of culture in motion, culture as multiplicity. Its desirability underlines the need for better theories of culture than *Culture of Complaint* provides.

Twice walking recently through central London I have bumped into groups of young men proudly wearing the evil martial insignia of the neo-fascist right. They were clearly in a confident frame of mind and their dismal influence is sure to grow. Sixteen

years after punk, there are no dodgy residues of art-school situationism to make their appropriation of the swastika an ambiguous gesture. Would Hughes' arguments lose their allure if the anti-democratic and particularistic assertions of these young men were substituted for the *reductio ad insanitatem* that he locates in aspects of gender politics?

Their badges and armbands illicit no discernible response from commuters streaming from Charing Cross towards Soho on a weekday morning or from the Saturday afternoon shoppers trickling past the back door of Camden Town Sainsburys'. They were surely seen, perhaps their presence was noted, but they were ignored, and then apparently they were forgotten. It is not simply that the culture of complaint has limits, but that people are rather more prone to complain about some things than others. Perhaps culture of indifference would be a more appropriate name for this state of affairs? Fear and intimidation are probably factors in the gestures of denial and refusal with which the neo-Nazi presence was greeted, but it would appear nevertheless that these symbols and their enthusiasts have become an acceptable feature of our public experience.

This is a political climate in which, if racisms are noticed at all, they are approached almost exclusively through the couplet of perpetrator and victim. The central weakness of anti-racist thinking has been a tendency to divide the world up into these two huge but simple camps. Everyone belongs to either one or the other, and there is supposedly little traffic between them. This absurd binary pairing ignores a central lesson offered up in the historical study of racisms in the modern world: namely that it is possible to be a victim in the morning and a perpetrator in the afternoon.

What if these over-familiar positions – perpetrator and victim – were supplemented with a number of other possible roles: those of the witness and the bystander, for example? These two additional options might alone become important constituents of a more serious and noble anti-racism, an anti-racism that could be a precondition of imaginative politics rather than its moralistic substitute. To bear witness to something is, in a sense, to take a degree of responsibility for it. By contrast, being a bystander means renouncing the opportunity to accept being implicated. Recognising these additional roles could also provide par-

MIXING IT

tial escape from the cult of victimage which – though Hughes fails to remark upon it – has led (anti-)racial politics into its dead end.

Watching the blank faces of those who chose not to apprehend the insignia of unspeakable terror, I wondered if the absence of any visible reaction to this unparalleled symbol of evil expressed changes in how British national identity is defined that have taken place between the late 70s and the present. Though Londoners have become accommodated to the consequences of living with terrorism that has origins in colonial conflict, our nation is certainly further along the path from being a colonial power. In 1993, lingering national nostalgia for imperial strength is less innocent, more intense and bitter than it was for the previous Royal Jubilee.

More important than the transformed significance of the Royal household in defining the attributes and mood of the national community is the changed significance of the memory of the 1939–45 war. What does the swastika signify as that memory wanes and the struggle against Nazism no longer supplies the context in which the most potent images of national community appeared? What also of the ways in which a low-intensity English nationalism articulates the contradictory impulses at the core of contemporary racist discourse? These days the young racists about town can simultaneously enthuse about both Hitler and Churchill. Their unsavoury patriotism and desires to keep Britain white and to retain England for the English can be stretched to include a positive affiliation to the Nazi culture that was once the force against which intensely nationalistic feelings were, and – if we believe the advertisements urging us to visit Churchill's war rooms or the Blitz display at the Imperial War Museum – still are defined.

The social memory of the 1939–45 war is important because it was pivotal in defining the tone of moral opposition to racism in the recent past. Britain has no Vichy history to revisit in order to clarify these critical issues. We do not have the holocaust memorials that could bring the relationship between past and present dangers into focus. The Anti-Nazi League is now scarcely more than a sectarian parody of its former self. Its slogan "Never Again" has diminished power because those to whom it should appeal are increasingly unfamiliar with the precious inventory of terrors that must not be repeated. The cry of "They shall not pass" sounds like an empty piece of masculinist bravado to anyone born

since the founding of Rock Against Racism or unacquainted with the history of anti-fascist struggles that identifies Nazism as an internal as well as an external problem.

While institutional forms of discrimination and hostility continue to operate unseen and often unchecked, it is important not to inflate the power and significance of marginal ultra-right groups. The danger they represent is not, as was feared in the past, that they would forsake the utterly alien image of Nazism and present themselves as true-Brit patriots, thereby leaving anti-racism unable to respond, but rather that national indifference to Nazism itself (past and present) would become such a defining characteristic of our public culture.

The model proposed by Hughes is complacent about these matters. He does not acknowledge this depressing possibility, which resonates strongly with evidence drawn from other parts of Europe but has no counterpart in the US. Hughes too readily assumes that a durable democratic culture can itself be redeemed from its contemporary debasement. The nuggets of liberalism in his book are spicy currents in the bland expanse of neo-con sponge-cake. He has nothing to contribute in the difficult struggle to bear witness to both past and present sufferings in ways that can develop a measure of pride in the commitment to hetero-cultural living that has been secreted in the best parts of *Culture of Complaint*.

If the contested memory of the 1939–45 war no longer provides a key to establishing a broadly based and culturally focused opposition to the threat of neo-Nazi expansion and other rebarbative expressions of know-nothing nationalism, what other cultural resources do we have to re-animate an anti-racist and fervently multi-cultural mentality today? Answering this question should help to explain why there are so few voices primed to answer the authoritarian appeal of nativist ideas, especially to young people, and why no believable, non-sectarian, morally authoritative opinions seem prepared to answer the quiet support for fascist aims and style that has already been offered from the core of the very youth culture that gave popular anti-racism its biggest momentum the last time around.

We cannot meet this need by taking refuge in the de-politicised approach to criticism and interpretation proposed by Hughes, whose appetite for the type of vernacular culture that made initiatives like RAR dynamic is in

any case a patchy and decorative presence in his text. Of course, we need to be able to read the political unconscious of contemporary culture without reducing cultural forms and expressions to a spurious set of easily specifiable political origins. I think this means being less apologetic about our judgments as critics and more prepared to defend, in a principled and rigorous way, our views of those elements in contemporary culture that give solace and tacit encouragement to anti-democratic, racist and misogynist standpoints, whatever their source.

The firm opposition to the gun culture, brutality, misogyny and homophobia voiced by black popular culture that has come from within the black communities during the last year provides just one example of what this might mean. Hughes is correct in that this bold critical stance – which emphasises complexity and refuses to trade in the idea of essential identities – demands a refined sense of the contested space where politics and culture collide and interpenetrate. It also means not being intimidated by the accusation of 'political correctness'.

Facing the rejuvenation of fascisms, it is appropriate to ask whether it is 'political correctness' to call for an end to the activities of the small terror-oriented groups that are able to develop their murderous activities in the areas of London governed by our own special version of residential segregation? Or to demand an end to murders, desecrations and the sour trickle of everyday harassment that corrodes metropolitan life and diminishes its pleasures?

Meanwhile, the chorus of voices repeating the numbing mantra that Britain "leads Europe in race relations" is growing louder. This type of complacency is more than just a way of dodging the implications of recent racist violence by making it seem more peripheral than it should. It is doubly dangerous because even if it contains a grain of truth, the lesson of our time is that the distinctive logics of racism can rapidly transport once friendly neighbours from benevolence and intimacy into a non-negotiable mutual loathing that denies the premises on which the idea of a multi-cultural utopia has so far been constructed. It bears repetition that brutality can appear in inverse proportion to the friendship patterns of former, quieter times.

The lust for purity which energises ethnocide works a special magic. Its intimidatory effects are already evident in the sphere of cultural criticism, where principled defenders of multi-culturalism have been few and far between. Hughes and a number of

others have been right to point out that the rhetoric of multi-culture has furnished a ready vehicle for the claims of particularity, but this is not an automatic or necessary link. Breaking it requires that multi-culturalism is no longer understood as a pseudo-technical term that applies exclusively and parochially to selected parts of the educational system. It demands that we return to the idea that pluralism can be theorised and that we use that critical practice to attack the pattern of neglect that is about to be implausibly hailed as a blueprint for stable and self-sustaining multi-culture.

It has been suggested that the new global culture of capitalism we inhabit somehow thrives on difference, skilfully turning its most powerful symbols into nothing more than a powerful marketing tool. I dispute that. It is not difference itself that is a seductive adjunct to the sale of soft drinks or clothes, but the safe recuperation of supposedly absolute otherness into a domesticated diversity which creates both pleasure and excitement. We can enjoy the somewhat premature celebrations associated with an innocent Benetton-style utopia and answer them with a profane multi-culturalism that neither inflates nor minimises the things that divide us. This multi-culturalism might begin by presenting difference as a complex principle of social and cultural life which urgently demands new tactics. The collection of witty archaisms that almost conceals Robert Hughes' depressing complacency is not much of an alternative.

Hughes inspires as well as depresses because his book hints at another approach. He tells us that if we are not to yield to the forces of particularity that are raging all around, we can no longer afford to overlook sameness. The first questions that would-be defenders of substantive multi-culturalism will be asked are these: "What amidst all the obvious irreconcilable differences can be shown to be held in common? What is shared?"

We should not let these questions pass. The answer to them is surely both everything and nothing. In framing our replies we must be able to show that the limits of cultural particularity are not knowable in advance of their exploration and that differences – flexible, specific and contingent – will emerge with greater clarity when we launch our situated enquiries into them and their effects. What is the same remains waiting to be discovered in a process that has its own pleasures and its own politics.

'Culture of Complaint: the Fraying of America' is published by OUP, £12.95

John Sayles, the doyen of US independents and director of films from 'Eight Men Out' to 'Passion Fish', talks with Trevor Johnston

SAYLES TALK

● As the latest young turks fight to see who can make the cheapest 'guerrilla' feature, John Sayles' position as the doyen of American independent film-making seems more than ever assured. Having started his career as a novelist and learned his screenwriting craft at the Roger Corman school of exploitation graft, Sayles' 1980 feature debut as writer-director with the seminal 'reunion' picture *Return of the Secaucus Seven* proved it was possible to finance your own movie, get it released and capture the attention of the Hollywood majors into the bargain. The \$60,000 price tag gained as much notice as anything else, but in its ensemble structure, broadly liberal sympathies, tart dialogue and willingness to focus on the concerns of the over 30s, the film now stands as a fair record of the forms and questions its maker would continue to address. His subsequent output remains poised in both creative and budgetary terms between the mainstream's dollar-intensive factory product and the indie sector's modestly resourced pioneer activity.

Sayles' latest offering, *Passion Fish*, marks an effective honing down of his concerns to date. The film is founded on a wry, clearly delineated script and close attention to the performance of Mary McDonnell as an injured television soap star coming to terms with her new-found physical handicap under the care of Alfre Woodard's equally troubled nurse.

Where Sayles' earlier union conflict chronicle *Matewan*, baseball corruption story *Eight Men Out* and contemporary urban survey *City of Hope* pored over wider social and historical frescoes to pick away at the land of the free's obfuscatory ideological myth-making, the new film is scaled down in approach. Yet, as a wise spin on the problem pic, it still cloaks itself, like many of its predecessors, in approachable generic garb. From his earliest commissioned screenplays, Sayles has been nothing if not resourceful in his mastery of sundry genre formulae. His own films have injected familiar stylistic routines with a greater sense of thematic commitment – as in the science-fiction

The Brother from Another Planet and the sports picture *Eight Men Out*.

In this light, it is easy to read Sayles' films as issue-led, each presenting the particular challenge of finding the right package in which to box a relevant social ill or question. While *Return of the Secaucus Seven* mines the insecurity of the 60s angry generation, *The Brother from Another Planet* tackles racial problems. Even Sayles' horror scripts for *Piranha* and *Alligator* are imbued with a whiff of eco-conscience, while the films where the genre element is less pronounced (*Lianna's* lesbian coming out, *City of Hope's* state-of-the-nation address) tend to leave the mechanisms of their ideological apparatus more vulnerably exposed.

To his detractors, Sayles' too-perfect liberal conscience can feel like over-earnest PC point-scoring, yet with *Passion Fish*, his human and societal insights are earned by the progress of the drama rather than willed into it from above. What's more, Sayles' unpredictability from project to project – who'd have guessed his next movie might be an Irish-set kids 'n' animals adventure – while still managing to retain an identifiable signature stands firmly in his favour.

Trevor Johnston: After 'Eight Men Out' and 'City of Hope', were you intentionally looking to do a more intimate piece like 'Passion Fish'?

John Sayles: I never make the movies in the order that I write them or think of them, and *Passion Fish* harks back to when I worked in hospitals 20 years ago. People had seen *Persona* by that time and would go on about the symbolism. I thought it was about a nurse and a patient, and I always reckoned it would be a good idea to do a comedy American version. What influenced me more was not going from the social to the personal, but the fact that I'd done three 'guy' movies in a row, which is basically what politics still consists of. Maggie Renzi, my producer, asked me if I had any stories for women, so I thought we'd do the hospital one next. A lot of things clicked together: we were travelling down South and hooked up



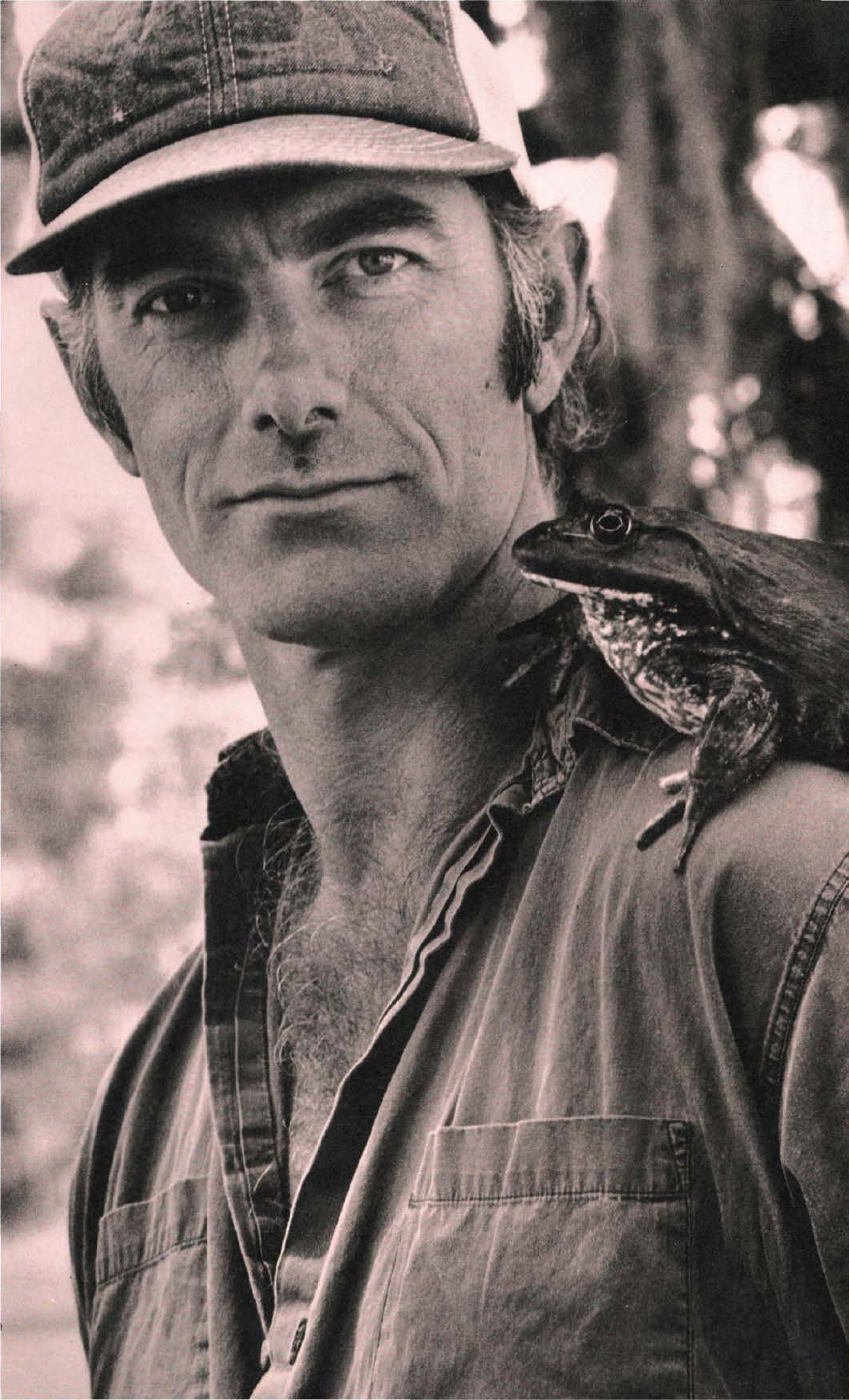
John Sayles, opposite; 'Passion Fish', above, the most recent of Sayles' independent productions to explore community

with a friend who plays in a zydeco band, we stayed in his parents' house and both the band and house ended up in the movie.

As in previous films you seem to be dealing with an area of American experience – the Cajun culture – that could be seen as peripheral.

There are specific reasons why I chose that place. I wanted it to be very much somewhere that wasn't New York, so that it was evident that May-Alice, the Mary McDonnell character, had to change herself to make it in the city. And there aren't that many places left in the US that are different from McDonald's shopping mall America. In that part of the South people still speak French on the radio, they have their own food, their own music. I also needed a place where if you came back as an unmarried woman of 30 people would know about it and you would know they knew. I needed a place that was sensual in nature: here are two women denying their senses or closing them down – Alfre Woodard's Chantelle has decided to become a nun and keep herself away from temptation, May-Alice is drowning her senses in alcohol and soap operas. It needed to be fleshy and sensuous, so there are more dissolves in that movie than I've ever had before. Your films seem to run counter to McDonald's shopping mall America in their examination of social, cultural or political specifics.

A lot of my movies are about community. Their culture is an attempt at community culture ►



Right now I'm broke – the last couple of movies haven't done very well. Who knows whether I'll make back the money I put into 'The Secret of Roan Inish', the one I just shot?



Talking with the animals: Sayles' as yet unreleased film 'The Secret of Roan Inish'

◀ rather than mass culture. May-Alice is an exile from the mass culture of the soaps, but it's still coming at her through her TV. It's only when she turns that off that she's able to appreciate what's around her.

I'm aware of mass culture, and I'm aware that I'm part of it. The stuff I do goes into theatres, it's advertised, I do interviews. But I want my work to be about it, but not necessarily of it. What I do in film is not just another meal at McDonald's, it's more a case of opening a funky little restaurant that becomes a cool hang-out. One week you do Cajun food and the next you do something else, on the understanding that most people aren't going to eat there. The bottom line is that they don't like that kind of food: it's too spicy, it's too foreign, they can't find the address. Most people don't see our movies in a theatre because they can't get to them. We don't get played in the chains.

The film could be summed up in a soap opera way – alcoholic wheelchair-bound ex-soap star recovers with the help of ex-junkie nurse – but one of its aims seems to be to bring out the difference between the clichéd soap opera treatment of these issues and your own more sensitive approach.

One of the things the movie is trying to be aware of is people's desire to have an easy answer and not slug through things. To be able to place someone right away, to resolve a conflict that's not resolvable in a half-hour television slot. Even though they have the time, soap operas don't have the patience to have characters who develop in an organic way – instead, it's forget about the fact that you're only 16, the ratings are dropping so you've got to have a long-lost son.

So much American culture is market-driven. Demographics and research are getting every-

where. I can make my movie and sell it to Miramax, telling them that this is the final cut and if you don't like it, don't buy it. But they still bring in their marketing people, who say this is what people have said and this is why we want to cut this, and this, and this. What I'm hoping is to use that system to carry what I want to carry, but not to get eaten up by it. It's like surfing – the wave could kill you, but it could also give you a great ride.

Do you find it frustrating that people don't see your movies in cinemas?

I wish they could. Usually the cinema is a fuller experience, though the television screen is an experience too – it may not be like going to a rock concert, but I still like records. It's certainly much better than there being no video, the movie playing in 15 cities for two weeks and then hardly existing. Most of the places I've lived, like Jersey City, have never played one of my movies. People there have seen them because of video, and both *City of Hope* and *Passion Fish* were financed by home video pre-sales. That money has been vital for the independent American film movement.

Has that situation given you a greater feeling of security for the continuance of your film-making career?

I would say that the continuance of my movie-making career rests on whether I can write enough screenplays and make enough money to finance or be a major investor in my next film – which will still have to be made for very little money. Right now I'm broke – the last couple of movies haven't done very well. Who knows whether I'll make back the money I put into *The Secret of Roan Inish*, the one I just shot? I've made eight or nine movies, but none of them has gone platinum. What I have is a track record that's very good in some ways, in that

I attract good technicians and actors because they think my stuff is good and interesting to do. And then I shoot fast, so it's only five or six weeks out of their lucrative schedules, which means that sometimes their agents will even allow them to work with me.

But as far as financiers are concerned, it's problematic; they see me as a guy who's had nine chances at bat and lightning still hasn't struck. I've kept being a director because I always had money to put back on the table. Right now I don't have any money left, so I'm looking for work as a screenwriter. Maybe my next picture will be shot on 16mm for \$500,000. When we finish one movie, we almost never know if we'll be able to do another. *Do you rule out writing the kind of pieces that might require studio backing?*

I write things because they're fun to write, because I want to tell the story. Then I look at them and think, "How the fuck am I ever going to get to make this?" So rather than writing studio movies, I do movies of a certain ambition. It's a mutual thing: they're not all too interested in what I want to do and I'm not too interested in what they want to do. Every once in a while there's something close, I run it by them and the answer is "Gee, I wish we could make movies like this! I really wanna see this movie! – but I'm not gonna give you the money to do it." That's fine, that's a legitimate answer. As far as being a director-for-hire, I don't get many offers. I usually get asked to do things I'm writing, television movies or cable movies mainly. After *Secaucus Seven* Roger Corman offered me *Mutiny on the Bounty in Space...* I sometimes wish I'd written that one!

In terms of writing, what gives you the confidence to connect with individuals whose experience is completely alien to your own? That's a common thread in many of your screenplays.

First of all, I'm not afraid of failure. I don't get upset if people don't like it: I'm doing it because I'm interested. Second, you build up your confidence by doing your legwork. You spend time with people, you read more than one source and you always remain suspicious about anything anyone else has written. When I wrote *Los Gusanos* I had to learn Spanish to get to the books I needed that weren't translated and to get to the people I needed to talk to. It's like being a reporter in some ways: I'm a conduit for people's voices. Like the disclaimers the networks put on some of their documentary programming, the views expressed in the movies may not necessarily be mine. Often some of my wackiest dialogue is verbatim – for instance, most of the dialogue in the car shop in *City of Hope* is just the flavour of the garage in Jersey City where I go to get my car not fixed – including my favourite line: "Benny, you fat fucken haemorrhoid, get in here!"

For me 'Passion Fish' is successful because of a combination of that kind of authenticity and the fact that it is extremely well constructed. Do you think the early part of your career – whether it was writing novels, theatre or exploitation pictures – was a good school for learning your craft?

It all contributes. Certainly acting helps, in that it forces you to think about point of view, so when you write different characters they

John Sayles

Born 28 September 1950,
Schenectady, New York

As writer/director

Return of the Secaucus Seven

(1980) also editor 110 mins

Lianna (1982) also editor 112 mins

Baby It's You (1983) 104 mins

The Brother from Another Planet

(1984) also editor 108 mins

Matewan (1987) 133 mins

Eight Men Out (1988) based on the
novel by Eliot Asinof 120 mins

Mountainview (1989) co-scr:

Marta Renzi 25 mins, short produced
for WGBH Television Workshop

"A hybrid dance/narrative set in
a rundown rural resort."

City of Hope (1991) 130 mins

"It just opened in France. I guess
it looks like pre-LA riots nostalgia
these days."

Passion Fish (1992) 135 mins

The Secret of Roan Inish

(1993, in post-production)

"I wouldn't drag a ten-year-old to
any of the movies I've made so far.
I've always been interested in animals
and majored in animal psychology.
It's a nice combination of things
I'm interested in."

As writer

Piranha (1978) d: Joe Dante

The Lady in Red

(1979) d: Lewis Teague

Battle Beyond the Stars

(1980) d: Jimmy T. Murakami

Alligator (1980) d: Lewis Teague

The Howling (1980) co-scr: Terence
H. Winkles; d: Joe Dante

The Challenge

(1982) co-scr: Richard Maxwell,
Ivan Moffatt; d: John Frankenheimer

Enormous Changes at the Last Minute

(1985) d: Mirra Bank, Ellen Hovde,
adapted from stories by Grace Paley

The Clan of the Cave Bear

(1985) d: Michael Chapman, adapted
from the novel by Jean M. Auel

Wild Thing (1987) d: Max Reid

"It's an urban Tarzan. The guy who
eventually directed it was the writer
whose script I rewrote. It wasn't as
good a movie as it might have been."

Breaking In (1989) d: Bill Forsyth

A Safe Place (1993) d: Perry Lang

"I wrote it seven years ago. It's a story
about a mercenary hired to lean on
this prehistoric tribe so they'll sign
away the mineral rights on their
island. It's a shitty title – I always
thought they should call it *Guano
Island Massacre* – but they're
making it now with Dolph Lundgren."

Television

A Perfect Match (1980) d: Mel Damski

"At the time, it was known as a crip
flick or disease-of-the-week picture.
A woman who needs a bone marrow
transplant gets together with the
16-year-old daughter she'd previously
had adopted."

Unnatural Causes

(1986) d: Lamont Johnson

"About the woman who connects
agent orange with the GIs coming
back sick."



Matewan (1987)

Shannon's Deal (1989, followed by
series 1989-90) d: Lewis Teague
"I wrote the pilot and two of the
13 episodes. It was the law show
where we never went to court, but the
network had no confidence in it and
kept changing the schedules. It was
a good show, but even the fans didn't
know where to look for it."

Music videos

Born in the USA

(1985) artist Bruce Springsteen

I'm on Fire

(1985) artist Bruce Springsteen

Glory Days

(1985) artist Bruce Springsteen

Unfilmed projects

Movie scripts written but never
filmed include:

Terror of Loch Ness

(1982)
"That was Ivan Tors, who used to own
'Flipper'. I got to read about manned
submersibles and Loch Ness
mythology."

Blood of the Lamb

(1981)
"It's about two guys infiltrating a
religious fundamental group, but they
start moving up the hierarchy and
don't want to leave. It didn't get made
because it was too serious."

Night Skies

(1980)
"Spielberg was going to produce it:
Ron Cobb, the art director who did
Alien, was going to direct. It was
Drums Along the Mohawk with little
aliens instead of Indians. On the last
page, the good alien is left behind
by the nasty aliens and makes friends
with the little autistic boy – which is
the first page of *E.T.*

"Jonathan Demme commissioned
a script about the *SS Indianapolis* in
1991, which is a movie version of the
anecdote Robert Shaw tells about the
sinking ship and the sharks in *Jaws*.
That was a long shot because it would
be expensive and 1,500 guys die.

"The one I really wish had got



Eight Men Out (1988)

made was a story about Bob
Merriman, the American leader of the
International Brigade in the Spanish
Civil War. By the end, TriStar felt it was
too political and not romantic enough;
I felt it was much too romantic and
barely political at all. Bille August
was going to direct, but then he went
off to do *The Best Intentions*."

Unproduced television work

"I wrote several pilots for *Brother from
Another Planet* as a TV show. It's still
in turnaround somewhere because it
lost my momentum."

"I just did a script for Ted Turner's
network from Peter Mathiessen's
book *Killing Mr Watson*, which may
or may not get made."

As actor

Piranha

The Howling

Return of the Secaucus Seven

Lianna

The Brother from Another Planet

Hard Choices

(1984) d: Rick King

Something Wild

(1986) d: Jonathan Demme

"I'm a motorcycle cop."

Unnatural Causes

Matewan

La fine de la notte

(1988) d: David Ferrario

Untamagiru (1990) d: Go Takamine

City of Hope

Straight Talk

(1992) d: Barnet Kellman

"I'm in the pre-credits sequence as
a C&W version of the guy I play in
City of Hope."

Malcolm X

(1992)

"I'm one of the FBI guys tapping
Malcolm's phone."

Matinee (1992) d: Joe Dante

My Life's In Turnaround

(1993) d: Eric Schaeffer, Donal Lardner Ward

"Two young guys were trying to get
a movie done for \$40,000, so
I helped them out by doing a cameo
as a producer."

Theatre

New Hope for the Dead and Turnbuckle

(1981) Boat Basin Theatre, New York

"They are two one-act plays, which
I financed and directed myself.

The first one is a curtain raiser
about a card girl at a boxing match
who's had a really hard time; the
second is a story about a guy who's
breaking up with his wife – except
that it's done in the form of a tag team
wrestling match."

Fiction

Pride of the Bimbos

(1975) novel
"It's about a drag softball team and
the relationship of the son of one of
the players with the short-stop,
a former detective midget. One of
those! It was originally titled *Balls*."

Union Dues

(1977) novel

The Anarchists' Convention

(1980) short stories

Los Gusanos

(1991) novel

Non-fiction

Thinking in Pictures: The Making

of the Movie 'Matewan' (1987)

don't talk in the same way or want the same
things. Novel-writing helps in a lot of ways too,
because it makes you think about rhythm,
though instead of it being a matter of words on
the page, in film you establish rhythm in lots of
different ways: there's camera movement, the
way characters speak, cutting, music, the varia-
tion in framing and so on.

I learned a lot from the directors who made
the Roger Corman movies, because they'd be
straight on the phone to me, screaming for
help: "I've got \$800,000 to shoot this epic
you've written. It's set in 1933, we've got 68
speaking parts and we start filming in two
weeks. Do you know anything about the movie
business? You're killing me!" Then I'd do a free-
bie rewrite so the movie could be better, rather
than them just tearing out pages of the script
at will. That way you learned what was capital
intensive and what was labour intensive: what
you had to throw money at and what you could
overcome by ingenuity.

*Do you have work that you're more proud of as a direc-
tor than as a writer?*

It's not that interesting to me. You just try to
tell the story as best you can, using all the
weapons you have at your disposal. For each
movie you have a different team, different
demands, different logistical problems. At
every point I try to zero in on the most impor-
tant thing in the scene – sometimes it's the
camera, sometimes it's the actors. When it's the
acting I tend to keep things simple and I don't
cut very much. I don't make movies because of
some technique I want to try; I try a technique
because there's a story I want to tell and that
seems the way to do it.

*When you started out as a novelist, what kinds of
movies led you to want to write screenplays and even-
tually direct?*

I have wide taste. I like everything from *Cries
and Whispers* to *Enter the Dragon*. I like different
things in those movies, obviously – the acting
in *Enter the Dragon* isn't my favourite thing
about it, and the karate in *Cries and Whispers* is
like nothing, whereas the storytelling grabbed
me. Whenever a movie could get me into the
story so I'd stop thinking about how it was
made, that interested me.

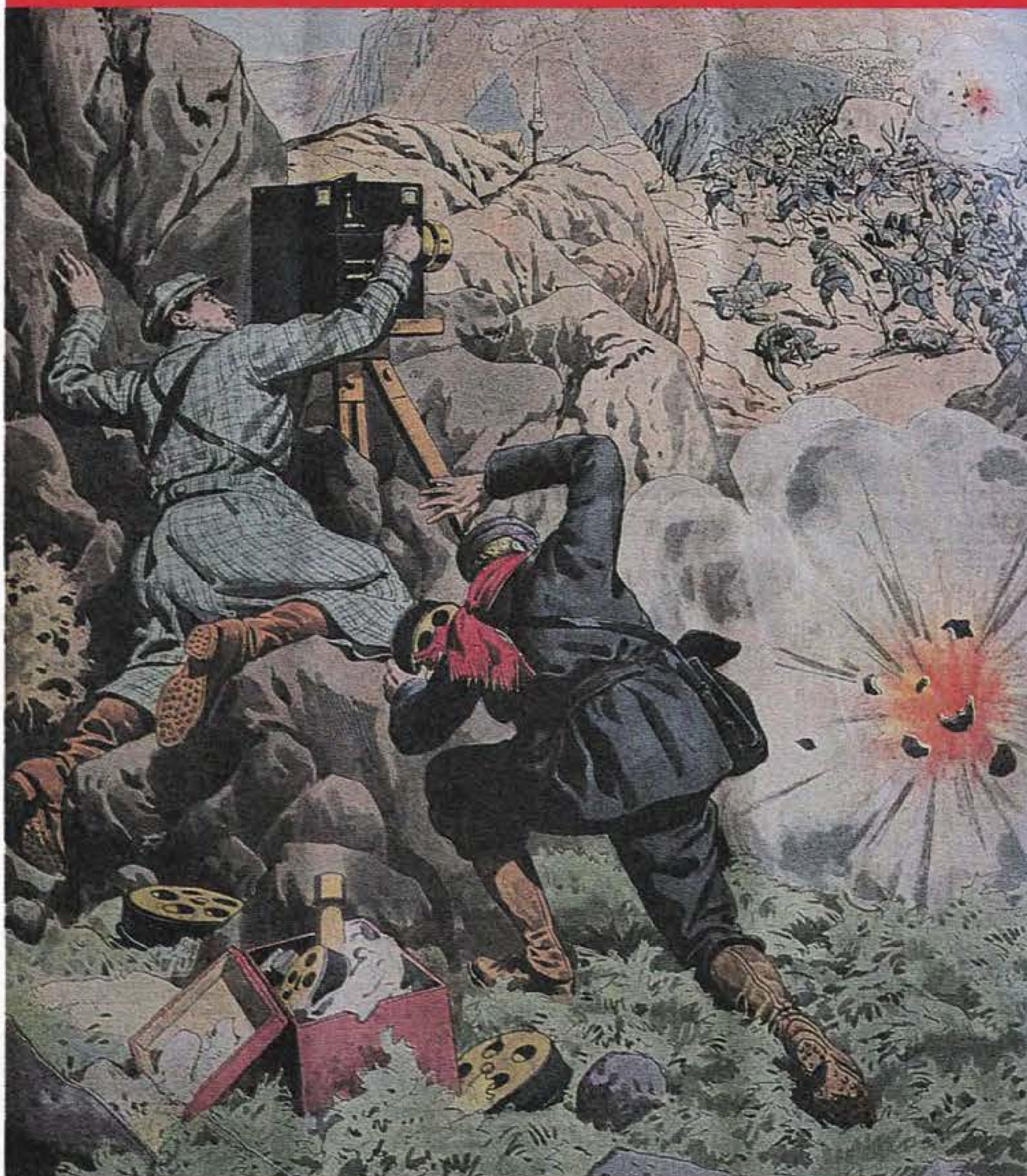
Has your career turned out the way you imagined?

I didn't know anyone in the movie business and
I didn't know anyone who was a writer, so I had
no role models. When I first went to Holly-
wood, I did think it through: I want to write
movies and I want to direct the movies I write.
How do I get to do this? They're not hiring the-
atre directors, they're hiring producers' sons,
stars, people who work their way up through
TV, and writers. Hey, I'm a writer, I can write my
way to it. I'll do original scripts and assign-
ments and if any of them make any money
maybe I can suggest that I direct the next one.
It was clear after writing three movies for Roger
Corman that those were not the kind of movies
that got any attention, so I went the Stanley
Kubrick route and made my own fucking
movie with *Secaucus Seven*. That was the start,
because even if I hadn't got it released, at least
I'd made a movie I wanted to make.

*'Passion Fish' opens on 3 September and is reviewed on
page 51 of this issue*

Censorship, truthfulness and sensationalism were the raging issues in the media circus which surrounded an earlier war in the Balkans. By Stephen Bottomore

IN TIME OF WAR



"The island was one large swamp, with huge trees sticking out, and knee-deep in the mud were thousands of starving Turkish prisoners, their faces and hands ashy grey and their eyes sunken in the sockets... Dead soldiers, robbed of almost every garment, lay there as food for the scavenging birds... I saw four men sitting round a little fire... I spoke to the nearest, but there was no answer. I repeated my question, with no result, and then pushed his shoulder. He rolled over – all four were dead."

Jessica Borthwick, camerawoman

● October 1912. The Hôtel de Bulgarie in Sofia was buzzing. War correspondents, photographers and cameramen had come from all over Europe and further afield. There were some 150 of them: immaculately dressed Frenchmen, Englishmen in semi-military outfits or checked suits, some carrying riding crops or revolvers. In as bizarre a pairing as history has ever recorded, Leon Trotsky and the Italian futurist Marinetti were also staying here, both acting as war correspondents.

Philip Gibbs has described the scene: "There were enough of them to guard a mountain pass. Men of the old school who had gone on the lone trail in ancient wars... shook their heads in dismay at this new-fashioned assembly of young journalists, photographers, artists, cinematograph men, and descriptive writers, who had come to make a Barnum and Bailey circus in the Balkans." They were there, of course, to report on the Balkan wars (1912-13), which began when four states of the region – Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia – combined to drive the Turks from their countries, and ended as the allies quarrelled and then turned on Bulgaria. If the Balkan wars are remembered today as the first conflict in which aeroplanes were used effectively in warfare, they were also a major media circus in which film played an important part.

Filming of war was nothing new in 1912. The cinema had arrived on the scene in 1895 and only two years later a film camera was used at the war between Greece and Turkey by war artist Frederic Villiers. In the years that followed, various other conflicts were filmed on a somewhat ad hoc basis, including the Spanish-American war (1898), the Boer War (1899-1902) and the Russo-Japanese war (1904-05). What was different about the filming of the Balkan wars was the involvement of the newly created newsreel companies – for example, Pathé Journal and Topical Budget – as well as the sheer number of cameramen involved: more than 20.

Pathé alone had up to eight operators in the Balkans; Gaumont, Cines, Eclair and other similar companies each had several; and there were also a number of local men. Transport was meagre, hunger and disease rife. Several cameramen were caught in the crossfire, receiving serious wounds. Yet the problem *they* considered the most serious was that of censorship.

The problems for the British camera teams began in London. Official documents preserved in the Public Record Office show that while the British Foreign Office vouched for every print journalist who applied for recommendation to the Turkish authorities, it refused to help the cameramen. In official letters, Pathé and Gau-

mont were told that only "the recognised journals of this country" could be accredited, but the real reason for the lack of aid seems to have been a typically British contempt for the vulgar cinema. In private notes in the FO files, the anonymous officials admitted that they were "trying to choke these people off", noting that Pathé also produced popular films for picture palaces and so "doesn't in this particular case deserve much encouragement". Another official added: "I think it horrible having cinematograph pictures of the war." The previous year the Turks had complained to the British government about insulting films of their war in Libya being shown in Britain, so the FO was already sensitive about the issue.

This lack of recommendation doesn't seem to have held up the British crews for long, and the main problem of censorship they and other camera operators faced occurred in the Balkan countries themselves. Restrictions varied from country to country. In Turkey when hostilities began (October 1912) censorship was relatively ineffectual. A group of journalists and cameramen on a train from Constantinople to the front discovered this for themselves as they halted at a station and a rumour spread that a party of refugees was arriving. "There was a stampede," wrote the *Times* correspondent, "...the photographers and cinematograph artists brought out their cameras and film-engines with such rapidity that the Bosniak shepherd [the censor] felt it his patriotic duty to forbid anyone to take photographs. Misguided worthy! If a squad of metropolitan policemen have often found it impossible to prevent the Cockney photographic artist from taking photographs in London's Holy of Holies, how much more impossible would it be for the slow-thinking Turk to prevent the same experts from carrying out their instinctive functions when the magic word 'refugee' was in the air."

But as the war progressed the Turkish censorship hardened. Sir Bryan Leighton found himself under arrest as he prepared to film the battle of Chatalja, while 'Tiger' Sarll claimed that in order to avoid the censors he had to cut up his films and post them home in small pieces. In other countries it was worse. The *Pall Mall Gazette* reported that in Montenegro cinematograph operators were kept well away from the action "and they have been eating their hearts out in a sort of concentration camp, where they never even heard the sound of cannon."

If they did get to the front line, operators were rarely made welcome. Pathé cameraman Laventure went missing at the battle of Lule Burgas. "We feared that... M. Laventure had been hit by a stray bullet," said the *Pathé Journal*. But it turned out that he had been captured, along with his assistant and three newspaper correspondents, by the advancing Bulgarians and accused of spying. (This was slightly far-fetched, noted Laventure, since their party was accompanied by two carts, five horses, large amounts of baggage and servants.) Taken under custody to Sofia, they were released after almost three weeks.

The Bulgarian censorship was the toughest of all, and journalists "were as remorselessly

muzzled as though they had all been convicted of rabies," as the *Fortnightly Review* put it. Despatches were ruthlessly pruned: in one case, *Le Figaro's* 600-word description was reduced to a mere nine. Correspondent Trotsky initially dismissed complaints about the Bulgarian authorities, saying "war is not, strictly speaking, carried on for the benefit of films and newspapers," but later he became one of the harshest critics of the censorship, which was indeed draconian: all journalists with the Bulgarian forces had to wear an armband, had to stick to precisely designated areas, and if they failed were promptly shipped off home (as happened to Marinetti).

With such harsh regulations, the cameramen had great difficulty in recording any warfare. Leighton claimed to have filmed "real fighting", and George Wilkins said he had filmed some of the battle of Lule Burgas, including scenes "of a Turkish gun and its crew being obliterated by a direct hit, and the infantry being mown down by machine-gun fire. Then, from a mound, a Turkish bayonet charge in which all the Turks were killed to a man in hand-to-hand fighting." But the surviving films (Leighton's at the Imperial War Museum, and what is presumably Wilkins' at Reuters) show no action sequences, though plenty of refugees on the march. Much of Wilkins' account as related to John Grierson and Lowell Thomas sounds like embroidery to say the least, and disagrees in details with the more sober account of his travelling companion, Grant.

Censorship was not the only difficulty. There was also the relentless greyness of the Balkan winter and the huge distances over which modern weapons could operate, beyond the range of most film-camera lenses. James Scott Brown, a Kinemacolor cameraman with the Greek forces, was disappointed by the filmic possibilities of the war: "I could not help recalling George Stevens' magnificent description of the battle of Omdurman, and in my mind I was all the time comparing what I saw with what he had seen. I was surprised and disappointed. There was next to nothing to be seen of actual fighting. It was all the world like an ordinary landscape occasionally emitting fire." Photographer Herbert Baldwin concluded that the range was simply too great to capture actual battles. "Our boldest pictures are taken at 5 or 7 yards... the cinematograph camera might do a little better, since the motion would bring into prominence certain important features of the picture which might otherwise escape notice, but I doubt very much whether the results would be 'worth while'." Baldwin concludes that cameras can only ever capture "the human side of the war", and this is certainly what made up most films which were brought back home.

There was much disappointment back home at the lack of action, the *Bioscope* noting that "the manner in which the Bulgarian troops conducted their toilet has certainly a quaint interest, but it scarcely constitutes an historical event in the Balkan crisis!", while the *Amateur Photographer* noted "we hear only vaguely of battles, and see them not at all. The only pictorial stand-by is that everlasting map." And indeed

several filmed maps were produced, including one by the celebrated animator Emile Cohl.

Yet films showing action were taken, by an unknown Pathé operator using a telephoto lens, and frames from five such films are reproduced in the *Pathé Journal*: they are clear and sharp, some showing shells exploding above the Bulgarian troops at Lule Burgas (taken from seven kilometres away). The long-range weapons of modern warfare had stretched the battlefield; here was a demonstration of how cinema technology could recover the distance.

But most cameramen did not have such lenses, so it is perhaps hardly surprising that they sometimes embroidered the truth a little. The troops in Leighton and Gordon's films are obviously being directed from behind camera to aim their machine guns and rifles and pretend to fire, though when screened in 1912 this footage was presented as "maxim guns and cavalry in action" at the battle of Lule Burgas. A Danish cameraman Fritz Magnussen faked the action shots he failed to obtain (it didn't do him any harm; he later became a leading light in Scandinavian cinema). Faked films were also produced away from the front. The whistle was blown on this in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which reported that certain companies "are alleged to be rehearsing in a secret spot, outside Paris, a series of battles which will be, or are being, duly photographed. The actors are mainly ex-



In the open: "Les dangers du reportage à la guerre", as depicted in the *Petit Journal*, opposite; 'Tiger' Sarll, camera operator for Pathé, with the Turkish army at Chorlu, above

soldiers, and the whole business is being carefully stage-managed with real rifles, cannon, and all other necessary properties." *Pathé Journal* revealed that the site for this fakery was the Polygone near the Bois de Vincennes, the site of its own studio.

Cries of "Fake - utter contemptible fake" resounded in the trade press and two of the companies with operators in the field took out advertisements to confirm the bona fides of their films. Topical cried "Beware of Balkan Burlesques" and "Do not be deceived by the Fabricator's back door garden battles!!!", while Gaumont proclaimed that its films were "All Straight". Fakes could be both convincing and emotive. In one incident in Paris a fake film was shown in which the Turks surrendered: this was too much for a Turk in the audience, who hurled a shoe through the screen shouting "Victory! Victory!"

Quality aside, fakes were an attractive option for the film companies because of the sheer cost of sending cameramen to the real ►

Jessica Borthwick (1892-?)

Twenty-two-year-old Jessica Borthwick was by no means a professional camera operator, having had only three days training before she left Britain. Her real métier was as an "animal sculptor", but she became fascinated by the Balkans and eventually spent a year there from 1913 to 1914. One correspondent dubbed her "Sapphira", describing her as "optimistic, energetic and young". In an age when females were supposed to be demure, her toughness was remarkable.

As well as a camera, Borthwick carried an arsenal of guns for protection. She endured severe privations, was imprisoned for over a week as a spy, living on bread and water, and was wounded several times by bullets and shell fragments. To cap it all, at Adrianople she was struck by cholera. Perhaps more than any of the other operators, she witnessed the true horrors of war.

Filming too was arduous. Various bits dropped off her camera and her tripod was smashed by a shell. And after all this, on her return, the customs authorities insisted on searching her boxes of undeveloped films: "So they opened them, and much of her labours were in vain, for the films were spoilt." She continued her adventurous career, joining the Belgian army in the 1914-18 war, and becoming a yachtswoman thereafter.

Sir Bryan Leighton 1868-1919 (and Kenneth Gordon)

Sir Bryan Leighton was an experienced adventurer and war correspondent who had been at the Spanish-American, Boer and Russo-Japanese wars and was engaged to film the Balkan wars by Jury's Imperial Pictures. He was in effect the producer, his cameraman being Kenneth Gordon, later well known in the British newsreel industry. Leighton was a man of little tact but great determination. Gordon was less tough and seems to have suffered badly in the Balkans: during the Turkish retreat late in 1912 another correspondent described him as "almost paralysed by the cold," and later "poor Gordon collapsed entirely, and lay on his back on the straw." Leighton had little sympathy and described Gordon in his letters home as a "hopeless" cameraman, "cheeky and incompetent", wasting film and even losing the "winding key" of the camera. Though they missed most of the fighting, Leighton and Gordon witnessed scenes of utter desolation, marching through ruined villages and past gruesome cholera camps. Their



"Sapphira": 22-year-old camera operator Jessica Borthwick

film including scenes of these sights was shown at the London Alhambra in November 1912, and still survives.

Captain Thomas William Henry 'Tiger' Sarll (1882-?)

Known as 'Tiger' Sarll, Sarll was 6'4" in height and had had an adventurous career as a soldier, war correspondent, big game hunter and actor before coming to films. He had lost an eye in the Boer War – a doubtful qualification for a cameraman at the best of times – and was not a great success behind the camera.

Sent out to film the war by Pathé, Sarll, like his colleagues, failed signally to capture the kind of action that was wanted. He secured shots of the wounded, but despite going through "murderous fighting" there was no sign of it in his footage. He later claimed a salary bonus from Pathé, saying that he had come under fire, his camera being mistaken by the Bulgarians for a machine gun, and that he had been arrested and ordered to be shot by the Turks. Pathé would have none of it and in the ensuing court case said that they had "promised to reward plaintiff if he sent home good films, but he did not do so and the trip had cost about £600."

After working briefly for Williamson's newsreel and filming during the First World War, Sarll spent much of the rest of his life as a performer and circus showman, specialising in an act in which he hypnotised pythons and alligators.

Isidor Robert Schwobthaler (?-?)

A native of Freiburg in Germany, Schwobthaler, known as Robert, came to Paris and helped form the firm of Raleigh et Robert. He set off for Greece in the summer of 1913 accompanied by an assistant. After an uncomfortable journey in a blood-soaked rail carriage and on horseback, they

made it to the Bulgarian frontier, where the Greeks were advancing along the banks of the Strouma river under a merciless artillery barrage from the Bulgarians. According to Robert, "The Greeks were not afraid of the Bulgarian infantry, though their artillery was extraordinarily precise. We turned the camera crank almost continuously, and we captured, among other incidents, a Bulgarian shell, which exploded very near us on a Greek battery, killing and wounding several soldiers... Everywhere were small white clouds of exploding shrapnel... and shells approaching with a sinister whistle." There were "hundreds and hundreds" of wounded, and several died "before our eyes."

Robert also filmed the work of a Red Cross station which was treating 300 wounded a day. His assistant became ill from drinking contaminated water, but Robert believed they were there for an important purpose: "creating a historical document recording impartially the terrible events in Macedonia and the horrors of war in general. May cinema help to make war disappear for ever among civilised people!"

The *Moving Picture World* described his film *Under the Machine Gun*, which ran for about an hour: "You see batteries in action, infantry advancing and cavalry charging, not in mimicry, but in the blood and brutal reality of war. At one time the two men posted their cameras almost in the center of a big battlefield and they caught shrapnel exploding, companies deploying and attacking, wounded men reeling backward and falling down the hill and cavalry coming to the rescue with drawn sabres and going at top speed... There is little of the romance and the glory which poets associate with war visible in these films which tell the truth so plainly and so literally."

war. The *Times* reported that insurance costs alone were astronomical, and one newsreel editor noted "the expenses of the Balkan War ran the leading cinema firms into thousands of pounds each, for which they practically received no return whatever." The Balkan wars were a major inspiration for fiction films, over 20 on the theme appearing in the following couple of years. And in Britain genuine films of the war did good business too, helped by forthright promotion. In Chichester a Miss Travers lectured with films of the war while a group "in the costumes of the Balkan races" appeared on the platform with her. In Newcastle, Gaumont put on a big display outside its offices, including a large war map with markers to show where Gaumont's cameramen were at work. Several companies also produced special posters to advertise war films.

In the war zone itself it was a different story. Cinema had become enormously popular in the Balkan region by 1912, with dozens of theatres showing European and American one-reelers. During hostilities one correspondent saw crowds around the many Constantinople cinemas and was surprised at the choice of films: "I had expected that films of the war were being displayed, but there was no single war subject on the bill, and with the army of King Ferdinand [of Bulgaria] almost thundering on their gates the people of the city concentrated their attention on the usual sensational tragedy, doubtful comedy, and mawkish sentimentality." In fact about the only war film shown in Turkey at this time seems to have been of their sole victory, the retaking of Adrianople in 1913, which was "greeted by a very enthusiastic crowd."

With so much censorship, so few films which captured action and so much faking, it would be easy to conclude that the filming of the Balkan wars was a failure. But this would be wrong. There were some cameramen who succeeded, and the common factor often appears to have been some degree of official approval for their work.

Take the Bulgarian Alexander Jekov. Jekov had a military background and was working for Pathé in Moscow from 1905 – ideal experience when he offered his services as cameraman to the Bulgarian military. He filmed at most of the battles on the Turkish-Bulgarian front: Lozengrad, Lule Burgas and Chatalja. His finished film, entitled *The Great Liberation War of Bulgaria against Turkey* and dedicated to the heroic Bulgarian commander Radko Dimitriev, was premiered in Sofia in August 1914, on the eve of the First World War. Jekov's efforts were deemed a success and he was appointed official cameraman to the Bulgarian army in the 1914-18 war. Another camera operator who managed to film was Jessica Borthwick. As the daughter of General Borthwick, who had helped to reorganise the Bulgarian army in the 1880s, she had a ready-made 'in' with the authorities.

The most successful film of the period was sponsored directly by the government of one of the belligerent states. The cameraman was Isidor Robert Schwobthaler, known as Robert. Robert's film was apparently made for a consortium of French, German and British companies

(including British producer Cherry Kearton), but its initial impetus came from Greece. "The King of Greece, fully alive to the educational value of the motion picture, called Mr. Schwobthaler from Paris and asked him to be the photographic historian of this war."

Unlike many other so-called films of the Balkan wars, Robert's showed genuine action and seems to have been a big hit in Europe. The film, sometimes with him in attendance to give a running commentary, was shown in America, in Germany to the Kaiser (who had a particular interest in military films) and in Britain under the title *With the Greeks in the Firing Line*. The British audience apparently sided with the Greeks, and the *Times* reported that "cheers were evoked by a picture of a Greek lad, Apostoulis Raptio, 15-years of age, who, though wounded in the head, persisted in fighting; as well as by pictures of an Irish nurse who was idolized by the wounded soldiers."

But the film had its greatest success in Paris, where it played under the title *Sous la mitraille* (*Under the Machine Gun*), and was exhibited to a fanfare of publicity from 31 October 1913 in the large Cinema Palace. *Comoedia* described it as "a moving page of the history of a conquest, written in red letters of blood, in the midst of a chaos of smoking ruins." There was a crowd on the opening night, with diplomats, officers and journalists in attendance, and the film was said to have been "an unprecedented success". The audiences were especially moved by scenes of the effects of dum-dum bullets, and women, we are told, "fainted... and men went pale." The crowds kept coming throughout November, with 7,000 people seeing the film in one week-end alone. It eventually ran to 140 performances, "a figure that has never been reached in the annals of film," according to *Comoedia*.

Robert had managed to be at the right place at the right time, where so many others had failed. He had the courage to film what he saw and, having been invited by the Greek king to record the victory, had suffered none of the obstruction faced by other correspondents.

It was the work of men like Robert which led Philip Gibbs to write what might stand as a testament to the Balkan wars cameramen: "When I stood in Servian towns, Bulgarian villages, and Turkish fields, watching the great drama of war, the cinematograph was there, and, in spite of censors and military regulations of unprecedented severity, brought back films recording for ever many strange and tragic and historic scenes - of Bulgarian peasants marching to victory or death, of Turkish prisoners slouching in despair, of burning villages, and the long trail of the dead and wounded... These pictures on the screen give reality to the scenes of war which none of the correspondents had been able to convey in censored cables and mangled articles. They were mirrors of life." Thanks to Dejan Kosanovic, Sabine Lenk and Dr Nicholas Hiley, who generously provided me with references. Sir Michael Leighton kindly allowed me to see the letters and photographs of his grandfather. Thanks also to Luke McKernan at the NFTVA, Paolo Cherchi-Usai, Marguerite Engberg, Kevin Brownlow, the Greek and Macedonian film archives, and most of all to the British Library

NIGHTMARES ON TELEVISION

ITN's Michael Jerney looks at war reportage and the home front in Britain

The image is unforgettable. An emaciated Moslem man behind the wire of a Bosnian Serb detention camp. It awoke the world to the abuse of human rights in the former Yugoslavia. The picture, taken by ITN television news cameraman Jeremy Irving in the first week of August 1992, was shown on hundreds of television stations around the world. It made the cover of 'Time' magazine and for the first time forced Yugoslavia on to the front pages of the British tabloids. The 'Daily Mirror' headlined it "Belsen '92", ABC television: "A glimpse into genocide".

The power of television has been demonstrated much more clearly in coverage of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia than it ever was in the so-called 'television war' in the Gulf. Two and a half years ago missile nose-cone cameras and live reporting from correspondents around the Middle East brought the war against Iraq into living rooms across the world. But the true nature of the war was never really seen on television. The impact of the long air bombardment of Kuwait and southern Iraq, that broke the will of Saddam's army, was never filmed. By the time western crews reached the carnage at Mutlah Ridge, the war was over.

Three months after the withdrawal from Kuwait the first western television

reporters arrived in Yugoslavia. They at first faced few of the restrictions imposed by both the Allies and the Iraqis in the Gulf War. Viewers saw close-up images of war in Europe. Scenes of burned-out houses, which two years on seem commonplace, shocked the west. In the months that followed, television teams captured a succession of images that focused opinion on the conflict.

If, in the age of film, television played a part in turning US public opinion against the war in Vietnam, then in the new age of video it has had an influence in making western opinion more sympathetic to the idea of intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Satellites have made television's impact instant. Within hours of the first transmission of Penny Marshall's and Ian Williams' reports from the detention camps, western political rhetoric changed. There was talk of military action to close the camps. That night President Bush, having seen the ITN pictures, called it a "humanitarian nightmare" and announced his intention to recognise Bosnia's independence.

The existence of the camps was known before ITN provided the visual proof. Journalists such as Maggie O'Kane of the 'Guardian' had written vivid reports. But it was the televisual image that made the world's politicians take note.

The power of a single video image has been a recurrent feature of the war. The picture of Sead Bekric, the boy with no eyes evacuated from Srebrenica, shocked viewers and elicited Baroness Thatcher's strongest remarks on the conflict. Her call to arm the Moslems was joined by others.

There is little doubt that many in government in the west would have preferred television to have shown no interest in the war. One senior Whitehall civil servant said in private conversation shortly after the camps were exposed

that the media's presence in Yugoslavia was a nuisance: "In Kurdistan you made our job of arguing for safe havens easier, now you're making life difficult by encouraging public support for western intervention."

The power of the television image brings with it a burden of responsibility for journalists in the field and editors at base. It's not our job to campaign or to seek to change the public mood. It is our job to inform. The pictures of Sead Bekric represented a horrible truth about the war. The man behind the wire, and most recently the pictures of Irma Hadzimuratovic, did the same. All these images were meant to inform. They also influenced opinion. The line between journalism and advocacy is crossed when influencing the public becomes the journalist's motive rather than a by-product of providing information.

Here at ITN, journalists grapple with the issue daily. Many of the decisions are not straightforward and we do not always get them right. On the whole, however, British television news is successful in using powerful images responsibly; to assist understanding.

The fashionable criticism that television news, with its concentration on strong pictures, shocks but does not inform is misplaced. Television news is and always will be a visual medium. The powerful images ITN and the BBC have shown have made the war relevant to a wide public. Our coverage has reached a much broader audience than the readers of the foreign pages of the quality press. It is strong pictures that have made that coverage accessible. Television should not apologise for its greatest strength; the ability to make complicated subjects understandable through the use of visual images. If it had not been for television, the great majority of the British public would know little of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and would care even less.



Changing our minds: the television image of a Moslem in a Bosnian Serb detention camp that shocked the world

Against the grain

Ginette Vincendeau

The Early Film Criticism of François Truffaut

Wheeler Winston Dixon,
Indiana University Press/Open University
Press, £25 (hb), £9.99 (pb), 177pp

Quite apart from his status as a film-maker, François Truffaut is one of the best-known French film critics of the post-war period. His attack on the French cinema of the 40s and early 50s, in 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema' (1954), and his defence, alongside his colleagues at *Cahiers du cinéma* and under the wing of André Bazin, of Hollywood, provided the foundations for the *politique des auteurs*. Before he started making films in 1959, Truffaut was a prolific writer, for *Cahiers* and other journals such as *Arts*, for which he wrote sharp, witty film reviews as well as more substantial pieces on the state of the industry. His 1967 book of interviews with Hitchcock made him a household name. 'A Certain Tendency' has been translated, anthologised and abundantly commented on; many Truffaut pieces have been collected in French and in translation, in two volumes of *Cahiers* articles published in 1985 and 1986, as well as in *The Films in My Life* (1978); more recently a compilation of letters has appeared, in French and in English (1989). Truffaut hardly seems to be in need of rediscovery.

However, Wheeler Winston Dixon proposes that the existing Truffaut criticism in English is incomplete and unrepresentative. He singles out Jim Hillier's two volumes of *Cahiers* articles in particular as guilty of reproducing only pieces on canonised A films such as Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* or Jacques Becker's *Touchez pas au grisbi*, ignoring Truffaut's writing on lesser-known B movies, crucial to the elaboration of the *politique des auteurs*. This book is a collection of hitherto untranslated pieces by Truffaut on a wide range of B movies, as well as a few on more classic material, such as Marilyn Monroe in *Niagara* and Brigitte Bardot in *Et dieu créa la femme...*, linked by Dixon's commentary on the articles. The material is organised in four chapters whose rationale is not entirely clear; generic or national divisions might have been more useful. The translations, in their desire to reproduce Truffaut's style – a difficult enterprise, it has to be said – don't always flow smoothly.

Undoubtedly, Dixon's premise is correct; the book will be welcomed by students and scholars of both Hollywood cinema and auteur criticism, since it not only extends the range of material available in English, but also reproduces texts which are difficult to get hold of even for readers of French, such as the articles from *Arts*. However, useful though it is, it is limited by the fact that neither the material nor the commentaries challenge the existing Truffaut critical paradigms. The astonishing piece on *Niagara* ("Beneath those skimpy skirts, those bosoms heaving with joy, there is said to be nothing, no underwear") only confirms what is clear from Truffaut's films, namely, as Dixon says, that Truffaut is expressing "his own sexual voraciousness, which seems deeply rooted in childhood fears and fantasies."

Similarly, the piece on *The Quatermass*

Xperiment simply reiterates Truffaut's prejudice against British cinema: "A film is a born loser just because it is English. Even a good script filmed by a good director and performed by good actors in England will most likely end up as a bad film. Why? This is the only mystery that English cinema has in store for us." His praise of the vitality and unpretentiousness of Hollywood B movies compared to the – in his view – stuffy and literature-bound French cinema is also familiar. And his hatred of popular French cinema of the time, manifest in a piece entitled '1956, Five Great Films, Seven Good Ones, An Event: It Is Proved That Cinema Can Do Without Scriptwriters', echoes 'A Certain Tendency'. On one of the few occasions when Truffaut revises a previous judgment (in his reappraisal of Claude Autant-Lara's *La Traversée de Paris*), Dixon's commentary sees it as an aberration: "It is difficult to credit its inclusion in Truffaut's list [of good films]."

If Dixon's book fails to live up to his claims of shifting Truffaut's critical canon, it is nevertheless an excellent read. Truffaut's film criticism is, as Dixon says, "opinionated and idiosyncratic". It is, however, enjoyable and insightful, despite the occasional incoherence and blind spots. It also offers the nostalgic pleasures of a vital polemical tradition of film reviewing which has all but disappeared, and of which the young Truffaut was a prime exponent.

Turning the tables

Alison Light

Perversions

Mandy Merck, Virago, £8.99, 301pp

Politics, semiotics and psychoanalysis – these, according to Mandy Merck, reviewing Peter Wollen's sci-fi fantasy *Friendship's Death*, were what the 70s were all about. It's equally where the essays in *Perversions* are coming from – though some have come a long way. What you get from this volume depends very much on your own perspective on that historical moment and its cultural projects. To me at least, this particular vision of the 70s now demands bifocals: its concerns seem at once extraordinarily far-seeing and curiously myopic.

Of the big three, it's psychoanalysis which makes sense both of Merck's feminism and of her reading of images. Psychoanalysis (especially in the version of Freud derived from Jacques Lacan) gave progressively minded feminists a way of prioritising sexuality while stressing its processes as unstable, unfinished and shaped by culture not nature. It meant opening up and legitimating the whole spectrum of sexual potentialities, including the so-called perversions. But it also meant opposing those on your own side who preferred more fixed and sometimes more romanticised accounts of their sexual identity. This volume straddles that uncomfortable position.

Psychoanalytic theory also helped to articulate a newly eroticised account of cinema and of viewing. In some circles, terms like voyeurism, narcissism and fetishism have become the *lingua franca* for talking about, and making, film. (Merck takes a lot of this vocabulary for granted: Freud's case history of 'Dora' is given a lengthy exposition while Laura Mulvey's "famous" article

'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' is not.) But Merck's essays also circle around an irony: the sustained attack by feminists on the exploitation of woman as spectacle (a fetishisation which her accounts of *Fatal Attraction* and *Lianna* convincingly expose) has actually reproduced the fixation with the sexual.

Merck's attitude to the holy trinity of the 70s is more agnostic than atheist. She is as suspicious of art cinema and of "instructional" independent films (her carefully loyal word) as she is of Hollywood; she keeps as much distance from feminist idealisation of victims and heroines (de Beauvoir on Bardot, Steinem on Marilyn Monroe) as from gay culture's search for "ego ideals". Being irreverent is crucial to her sense of perversion, which means turning the tables on "the right, the reasonable or accepted", whoever claims to represent it.

This puckishness saves the essays from being cliquey and makes them a pleasure to read. Merck's career (from her journalism in the once radical London magazine *Time Out* to producing for Channel 4) has always been at the applied and popularising end of a rigorous, sometimes mandarin, set of theories. Her writing is mercifully free of self-preening or condescension and for all its strong sense of cultural and political milieu, avoids the vanities of the coterie. Under her editorship, after all, the notoriously arcane film journal *Screen* became both more readable and politically alert.

But irony, as she knows, is a double-edged weapon. Her writerly tactic is to avoid judgment, unpacking a number of propositions and saving herself up for an ambiguous punchline. Her style is both racy and oddly impersonal – as author she is largely offstage, paring her fingernails. If this frees her from self-congratulation and from the moralising claim to truth which has riddled so much feminist autobiographical writing, it also covers her tracks. Whatever distance Mandy Merck has travelled from the 70s, it's not always clear where she feels she has arrived.

The essays oscillate between wanting to deconstruct the very notion of sexual identity and a fear that letting go of that attachment may mean political abandonment. At one pole is Merck's insistence that the lesbian portrait is not possible: there is no authentic essence to be portrayed, only the signs through which we read and make up our sense of self. At the other, is the final essay on lesbian sado-masochism, which seems to hanker after discovering a new sexuality with a vanguardist potential. If only, she seems to say, the sexual *could* be the primary base for social transformation; the flesh seems willing but the spirit weak.

The spectre which haunts the book is that of post-modernism. Yet Merck's own deconstructive stance is more at home in the 90s than in the 70s. (Is this why Virago left the word psychoanalysis off the cover in favour of less heavy topics?) It may be that in future the '68 generation will appear as much an early sign and symptom of the 'post-modern' as a resistance to it; part of a much larger process of cultural fragmentation, breaking with older continuities and forms of belonging. Typically, Merck's essays make hardly any reference to older political traditions.

Merck worries that "this post-everything age" will see the disappearance of a sexual



politics which she has depended upon, however much she lambasts its follies. But if we are to believe psychoanalysis, what we fear is also what we desire. When the robot of the future comes down to Earth, perhaps it won't, as in Peter Wollen's fable, be fascinated by human sexuality and the unconscious, but find the whole thing touchingly antiquated. Should we really dread the day when it might come to seem perverse that anyone ever defined their being by their sexual practices? Perhaps it's something to look forward to.

Man with no name

Paul Julian Smith

Clint Eastwood: A Cultural Production

Paul Smith, UCL Press, £30 (hb),
£12.95 (pb), 292pp

Eastwood bound: since Annie Leibowitz's shot of Clint tied with rope and wreathed in dust appeared on the cover of Andy Metcalf and Martin Humphries' *The Sexuality of Men*, Eastwood has been something of a fetish in men's studies. And who better to guide us round the male monolith than Paul Smith, founding father of "men in feminism"? Unfortunately, Smith trails with him from his earlier project a defensive tone and an often clotted prose style: he devotes much space to exploring the implications for women, ethnic minorities and gay men of a corpus often accused of fascism; and, if he has jettisoned the perpetual parentheses of his earlier work, he still mobilises a distinctly unpleasurable critical language.

Mon dieu: during the 50s Brigitte Bardot scandalised France in such films as 'Et dieu créa la femme...', provoking writers as diverse as François Truffaut (see 'Against the grain') and Simone de Beauvoir to pen polemics in her defence

Smith warns in his introduction that he is not aiming for a well-made academic book; and his broadly chronological account of what is now a complex and extended career is delivered in fragments of varying length and register. Crosscutting between history, technique and theory, Smith offers an account of Eastwood's production company, Malpaso; describes his shooting style, modelled on master Don Siegel; and adopts a theoretical viewpoint which eschews both auteurism (for the "intendments" "proffered" by the films themselves) and the newer "uses and pleasures" school in which audiences are awarded paternity rights over the film and permitted to make what they will of it. Smith's model of the relation between cinema and the real is thus mediated and (unfashionable word) dialectical.

Unfortunately this leads him to make heavy weather of some truisms in the first half of the book, where his priority sometimes seems to be to forestall criticism from fellow cultural theorists. There are too many unwieldy and impenetrable sentences like the following: "Thus what is at stake here and what is mostly of interest is not so much the individual utterances or the possible complicities of the director or star, but the dialectical situation wherein their understandings of their own work conflate the available discourses and values of the culture in which they find themselves with the discourses it is possible to utter and the values it is possible to proffer within the arena of American film-making."

Relentlessly generalising, Smith's agenda (his view of what is at stake or of interest)

may not coincide with those concerned with the specificity of Eastwood's achievement. Indeed, Smith's dispiriting argument would suggest that Eastwood has no specificity, that far from being a maverick, he is simply a mouthpiece for the mainstream motion picture industry. What is more, the historical back-up is sometimes slight, as in the account of Spaghetti Westerns, while the analysis of film technique is briskly dispatched with a few choice phrases on backlighting or the close-up, denying the reader any real engagement with the experience of seeing the films.

More importantly, chapters on 'Misogyny' and 'Gay Subtexts' are brief and sketchy. While Adam Knee has recently argued the case for transgender identification in *Play Misty for Me* and Robin Wood has explored the male masquerade in the buddy/drag scenes of *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot*, Smith characteristically argues that the first film merely perpetuates the idea that sexually active women deserve to be punished and the second contains queer coding within a master narrative of national allegory. He may well be correct; but his conclusions are hardly cheering.

Things pick up in the second half of the book, with a sighting (lovingly replayed later) of Clint's oiled buttocks twitching in *Tightrope*. And the chapter 'Eastwood Bound' (reprinted from *Differences*) is exemplary, tracing the eroticisation of the male body and the emergence of "masochistic marks" and "hysterical residues" uncontained by the "intendments" of the films in which they are found. It also marks the book's first extended engagement with psycho- ►



The circus,
Charles Chaplin 1928



◀ analysis, with a critique of the uses of masochism in Kaja Silverman, Gaylyn Studlar and Leo Bersani. Subsequent pieces on the “burlesque body”, on the pleasures of performance, on vitamins, palimony and paternity are fresh and stimulating. And Smith ends on a high note, with prophet Clint, newly auteurised in his own country, about to be granted the Academy Award for *Unforgiven*.

In his recommendation of *Clint Eastwood* on the back cover, Andrew Ross calls the book “iconoclastic”. It is a word more suited to Ross’ own work on men in popular culture, which is so much more flashy and fun. Responsible and serious, above all measured, Smith does not always give a sense of the power of filmic fantasy and the pleasures it stimulates. Nevertheless, it is to his credit that he refuses to reproduce those fantasies, and that he begins the necessary work of unbinding us from them, even if he cannot console us for their loss. He is ill served, however, by the poor quality of the illustrations offered by the new University College imprint.

Taking a look

Rachel Bowlby

Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern

Anne Friedberg, California University Press, \$28, 287pp

Window Shopping takes its provocative place among a number of recent studies that look at looking itself in relation to mechanically produced images: looking not in the light of a general theory of culture or psychology, but in terms of its multifarious histories. These involve the technical and commercial apparatuses of cinema, television, shopping malls and videos, and the variable subjective forms of a spectatorship that is always gendered, and of genders that are always implicated in historically changing forms of looking. At the same time, the book is also a history and critique of the ways looking has been looked at (or overlooked) in theories of

Why do people choose to see particular films? And can we tell by looking at them what their preferences are?

The idea that identity lies on the surface, in facial expressions, body language and dress, is explored by photographer Jérôme De Perlinghi in a series of portraits of visitors to the Brussels Film Museum taken over a three-month period during the summer of 1985 (Cinephiles/fielen, Belgian Royal Film Archive, £19.95). The portraits are juxtaposed with stills from the movies the visitors have just seen or are about to see, revealing – sometimes with humour, occasionally with pathos – fascinating patterns of similarity and difference. When it comes to going to the cinema, all may not be as it seems...

the post-modern and of the ways the historical and social dimensions of looking have been ignored in some theories of cinema spectatorship.

Anne Friedberg reconstructs a history of what she calls the “virtual and mobile” gaze that has come to dominate contemporary modes of looking, and which she sees as fundamental to what has been characterised as a contemporary “post-modern” subjectivity. For the beginnings of such a look – at a virtual reality rather than a “direct perception”, at a moving spectacle or from a moving spectator position – Friedberg takes us on a time trip back to the visual technological wonders of the nineteenth-century urban world, whose phantasmagorias, dioramas and panoramas can now be seen as forerunners of the ubiquitous screens and malls of twentieth-century culture. The book travels to and fro between different periods and different kinds of writing, with rich illustrations in the form of black-and-white photographs which give it an unexpectedly nineteenth-century aura. There are inserted “passages”, à la Walter Benjamin, on particular malls or films – and there are also polemical sections on issues and confusions in contemporary theoretical debates.

Here Friedberg’s toughest line addresses what she regards – in a deliberately psychoanalytic sense – as a “displacement” of feminist concerns to the benefit of a fetishisation of the post-modern as what counts as aesthetically subversive or culturally central. Her own version of femininity and feminism points to a growing equality of vision and access made possible by the development of forms of *flânerie* available to women as well as men – from the nineteenth-century department store, through cinema-going and on to the modern “individualisation” of home video spectatorship, which gives both women and men control over what, how and when they watch. Yet such relative empowerment, as Friedberg also emphasises, has a negative other side: its dependence on commercialised technologies that are in every sense englobing.

Although she rejects the model of history that presents a series of ruptures and discontinuous periods, Friedberg’s own sense of a “gradual” supersession of modern by post-modern forms does involve a more fundamental sense of break: from a subjectivity that would once have been rooted (not mobile) and straight (not virtual) in its view.

The “decentred” and “fluid” qualities of post-modern subjectivity go together with a diminished sense of historical memory – a faculty which, by implication, would have been available to subjects not yet surrounded and formed by the visual technologies of timeless imaginary mobility. While Friedberg is all for mobility, particularly when it concerns the “trying on” of different identities for the window-shopping *flâneuse*, here too she identifies a double edge to the appearance of a happy ending, or at least of a happy wandering: subjective *flânerie* entails the loss of more rooted senses of place and time.

This dialectic opposing of the fixed and the fluid is not elaborated – but, in an equally twofold way, it is the book’s strength, as well as occasionally a frustration, that it offers so many tantalising “window-shopping” suggestions in so many different fields and malls of contemporary questioning.

In particular, the association of subjective mobility with visual media invites comparison with older or other forms: how do the shifting identifications of film-watching differ from those prompted by reading novels, for instance? Or indeed, in the age of visual technologies, how does it happen that the printed word still appears as a natural form for exposition and critique?

Window Shopping is a fascinating and flexible enterprise which, if it does not ultimately deliver all the goods (what could?), will for that very reason be a source of further reflection and inspiration: it moves on the sometimes footsore debates about post-modern culture, feminism and cinema spectatorship in new and stimulating directions. Take a look!

Dambusters

On 20 July 1986 I was hanging around in Nottingham waiting to perform in a touring comedy revue in the evening, and having nothing to do I decided, for a laugh, to go and see *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. For a laugh, because when I was 21 the only reason to go to the cinema seriously was to see an art film, Godard's *Passion*, perhaps, or Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, or *The Draughtsman's Contract*. I think *The Draughtsman's Contract* was my favourite film.

Ten minutes before the end of *E.T.* I was for the first time in my life worshipping at the altar of cinema. My face was not wet with tears, it was *awash* with them – fierce, fierce tears wrung out of me through divine emotional manipulation. Steven Spielberg had burst a dam in my heart.

Ever since, this is all I have wanted from films: to make me cry. Which means that now I almost never go to see art films, as art films tend to reject engagement and empathy and identification and all the other techniques through which Hollywood manipulates the viewer, and which are, of course, the *point* of the cinema. If you don't want to be emotionally manipulated, you can stay in and watch *Countdown*.

Watching a film at the cinema involves losing the self, not being made more aware of it: that's why it happens in a large, dark arena, hundreds of small 'I's swallowed up by the big screen. And the greatest loss of self is tears – serious crying, real uncontrollable weeping at the breakdown of love or restored happiness or the death of a fictional character, someone who is not yourself (this is where crying at the cinema is different from crying at one's own misfortune or at starving people on the news – the self cannot be lost here because it is, in one way or another, responsible). Cinema crying is a giant, freely given I-relinquishment: sometimes you can feel yourself being syringed out of your eyes in bucket loads.

It's incredibly exhilarating to feel a sentimental film break through one's heavily encrusted force field of cynicism. I now go open-eyed and ready to weep, but many don't; it's all viewing from a distance. So I remember liking very much a review of *Beaches* (a film I haven't seen but which sounds fantastic) in *Time Out*, in which the reviewer systematically went through every flaw in the structure, narrative and characterisation, and then said, "but at the end, you cry, goddammit, real tears." I love that: I think I almost cried when I read it.

Here is a list of the top five films which have made me cry: 1. *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*; 2. *Edward Scissorhands*; 3. *Ghost*; 4. *Green Card*; 5. *Play It Again, Sam*. I saw all of these in the cinema except *Ghost*, which I saw on video. This is usually a mistake, the dark temple of the cinema being much more conducive to tears, and it's part of the catharsis that you cry in the semi-public space of the auditorium, shedding, in the swoon, self-consciousness and inhibition. But on my own in my living room, I blubbered so much at the end of *Ghost* that I started to laugh.

Ghost is also significant because of the almost total failure of *Truly, Madly, Deeply* to make me cry, despite having virtually the



Cinema is the place for serious crying, argues comedy writer and performer David Baddiel as he remembers his face awash with tears during 'E.T.'

same plot. This may be something to do with the fact that contrary to what most British critics thought, *Ghost* is a far better film – funnier, cleverer, more tightly written but most importantly, true to its Hollywood nature, dealing in *big* emotion and *big* sentiment. Next to it, *Truly, Madly, Deeply* seems a bit Radio 4.

The other film in which I did a lot of crying recently was *Mr Saturday Night*, but it didn't sustain. It peaked too early: I was already crying at the scene where Billy Crystal tells warm jokes at his mother's funeral and thus had nothing left to give by the time he is reconciled with his daughter (in fact, I started to feel vaguely irritated, as when a partner perfectly scratches an itch on your back, but then carries on well after the itch has gone). In the same way that it's a good thing that most football matches are rubbish, because it heightens the moment when the one classic in a decade comes around, so a great crying film should be economical with the sentimental moment: it should be a moment, an extended moment perhaps, but a moment – *Mr Saturday Night* tried to get away with five.

The films all follow a pattern. They all contain a love story, whether it be between a man and a woman, a boy and an alien, a woman and a ghost or a woman and a Robert Smith lookalike who could have worked for Vidal Sassoon. And they all end sadly, but not too sadly (a happy ending

never makes me cry – hence both *Frankie & Johnny* and *The Bodyguard*, two films which initially looked set to soar Kleenex profits, ended for me in dry-cheeked disappointment). To be specific, all five films end with the lovers going their separate ways, yet no matter how separate these ways are – between continents, between planets, between life and death – there is always a sense that somewhere, somehow, under the pear trees in paradise, they'll meet again. In fact, this meeting-to-come is so contained in the tableau of separation that none of these films requires a sequel; that the lovers will come together again is so perfectly implied in their parting that to realise it would mar the viewer's imagination of it.

Play It Again, Sam is there because although the plot of *Casablanca* conforms perfectly to the pattern I've just described, no one can cry at *Casablanca* – the lines are too oversaid, their (extreme) beauty too raped by quotation and sad parodies by Bobby Davro. But when in the final scene of *Play It Again, Sam* Woody Allen slips those same lines by you without you noticing it, and Diane Keaton, in tears, says "That's beautiful" and Allen says "It's from *Casablanca*. I waited my whole life to say it..." suddenly a hindsight light is shone on the original lines, their beauty is re-revealed, and I can't swallow.

It tends to be one line that sets me off. For some reason anything to do with angels and/or snow is a good bet – so in *Groundhog Day*, although it has got a purely happy ending, I was in a lot of trouble when Bill Murray, in listing all the things he already knows about Andie MacDowell from his day-after-day contact with her, says "I know that in the snow you look like an angel." An angel in the snow: the biggest bawling I ever did at the cinema was at the last line of *Edward Scissorhands*. When Winona Ryder, now a grandmother telling the story to her grandchild, says, of snow, "sometimes you can still see me dancing in it" – recalling the very beautiful scene earlier in the film when she dances amid Edward's ice sculptures as the snowflakes fall – I was reduced to liquid form. At one point I thought they were going to have to sponge me down.

As I leave the cinema after a film has made me cry, I can feel myself holding on hard to the memory of it, trying to prolong the emotions it has aroused, trying to use them to enhance some sense of wonder at the world outside. This can be tough: it's such stuff as dreams are made of, after all, and it doesn't take much to burst the bubble of serenity within which the film has enfolded me. I saw *Edward Scissorhands* with hard-bitten no-nonsense man's man American comic Denis Leary, and as we left the cinema, Denis told me he liked the film "apart from that appalling last line, *sometimes you can still see me dancing in it*, I mean, what sentimental shit!" I could feel my core of wonder shrivelling with every word, as I nodded, smiled cynically, and pretended there was something in my eye.

The series 'Newman and Baddiel in Pieces' opens on BBC2 on 20 September, followed by a tour ending in a show at Wembley on 10 December



Divine manipulation: the love story between a boy and an alien that makes men cry

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and new British TV films

Acción Mutante

Spain 1993

Director: Alex de la Iglesia

Certificate

18

Distributor

Feature Film Company

Production Companies

El Deseo (Madrid)

CIBY 2000 (Paris)

Producers

Agustín Almodóvar

Pedro Almodóvar

Associate Producer

Esther García

Production Supervisors

Yves Attal

Ande Girard

Casting

Bilbao;

Ortega Ortún

Amaya Díez

Assistant Directors

Pep Nadal

Pilar Thomas

Jorge Guerricaechevarría

Screenplay

Jorge Guerricaechevarría

Alex de la Iglesia

Director of Photography

Carles Gusi

Cinemascope

Colour

Fuji

2nd Unit Director of Photography/

Steadicam Operator

Joaquín Manchado

Video

Gorka Rotaache

Special Optical Effects

Optical Film Effects

Editor

Pablo Blanco

Art Director

José Luis Arrizabalaga

Special Effects

Oliver Gleyze

Yves Domenjoud

Jean-Baptiste Bonetto

Bernard-André le Boetti

Music

Juan Carlos Cuello

Music Director

Tomás Garrido

Orchestrations

Juan Carlos Cuello

Music Producer

Juanjo Valmorisco

Songs

"Acción Mutante",

"Mineros Locos"

by De Def Con Dos,

performed by Oco;

"La Fiesta" by

J. Oellerie, F. Manston,

performed by Maisa

Hems; "Judy con

Disfraz" by Fred

Courrier, Andrew

Bernard, performed

by Pedro Sánchez;

"Olvidame" performed

by Anonymous;

"Mission Impossible"

by Lalo Schiffrin;

"Juntos se van"

performed by

Mariano Lazano

Costume Design

Estibáliz Markiegi

Wardrobe Supervisor

Lena Mossun

Make-up

Paca Almenara

Special Make-up Effects

Hipólito Cantero

Titles/Opticals

Carlos J. Santos

Sound Co-ordinators

Golstein & Steinberg

Sound Editor

Juan Carlos Cid

Sound Recordists

Antonio Morales

Alberto Herena

Manolo Cora

Music:

José Vinader

Javier Vacas

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Alfonso Pino

Sound Effects

Golstein & Steinberg

Mariano Lozano

Jesús Pena

Jorge Rodríguez Inclán

Alfonso Pino

Stunt Co-ordinator

J.P. Producciones

Armourer

Hipólito Cantero

Cast

Antonio Resines

Ramón Yarritu

Frédérique Feder

Patricia

Alex Angulo

Alex

Juan Viadas

Juan

Karra Elejalde

Manitas

Saturnino García

Quimicefa

Fernando Guillén

Orujo

Jaime Blanch

Mad Presenter

Ion Gavella

Jorobado Maldito

Bibi Andersen

Rosí de Palma

Lujo's Guests

Enrique San Francisco

Novio Ultrajado

Féodor Atkine

Kaufmann

Felipe Vélez

García

Paco Maestre

Grandfather

Ramón Barta

Elderly Blindman

Alfonso Martínez

M.A.

Santiago Segura

Ezequiel

David Gil

Abraham

Carlos López Perea

Zacarias

Pedro Luis Perea

Kino Puella

Pololo

Mad Miners

Miguel A. Chacón

Culturista

Esther García

TV Presenter

Santiago Lajusticia

Guest

8,498 feet

94 minutes

Subtitles



Gore of desire: Frédérique Feder, Antonio Resines

2012. The facially scarred Ramón Yarritu is the founder of Acción Mutante, a terrorist group which recruits only the disabled and has waged a campaign against a health- and beauty-conscious society. While in prison, Yarritu has seen his comrades bungle mission after mission; on release, he takes charge of the kidnapping of Patricia Orujo, daughter of a wholemeal bread tycoon. Assaulting her wedding party, Acción Mutante seize Patricia and slaughter the guests, but their bungling leaves two of their number, the hunchbacked Chepa and the hulking M.A., also dead.

Acción Mutante take off in a spaceship for the planet Axturias, Yarritu having arranged with Mr Orujo to exchange Patricia for the ransom in the Lost Mine Bar. En route, Yarritu murders his comrades, planning to take all the money, but Alex Abadie, a Siamese twin, survives the death of his brother Juan and swears vengeance.

The spaceship crashes on Axturias, and Yarritu drags Patricia – who, suffering from the 'Stockholm Syndrome', begins to fall for her kidnapper – across the deserts of the planet while Alex runs into a helpful taxidermist who preserves Juan. Yarritu and Patricia come across a family of mad miners who torture Yarritu and intend to rape Patricia, but the girl turns the tables on them and rescues her kidnapper, driving him to the Lost Mine Bar, and planning to abandon her former useless life.

Yarritu, Patricia, Orujo, Alex, the Mad Miners, Patricia's weedy fiancé and a TV reportage team converge at the Lost Mine Bar, which is surrounded by the brutal police. Orujo, who nurtures a secret hate for his business, refuses to pay the ransom and wants to blow everyone up.

Alex confronts Yarritu with his treachery, wanting to kill his comrade. A shoot-out and an explosion leave everyone dead except Alex, freed of his brother's corpse, and Patricia, who loses an arm. Together, the survivors stagger out to face the police.

In its first scene, *Acción Mutante* swiftly delineates its appealing

premise of a handicapped vigilante group (their stylised logo is a wheel-chair-bound stick figure brandishing a rifle), providing its grungy heroes with a coolly anarchic TV-style credits sequence complete with an obnoxious 'Acción Mutante' rap and an evocative snippet of Lalo Schiffrin's *Mission Impossible* theme.

Having targeted body-builders, TV aerobics classes, sperm banks and other epitomes of a beauty-conscious society, the group quite properly move on to a high society wedding bash (which, with its absurd clothes and bubblegum music, is the single sequence that suggests the influence of producer Pedro Almodóvar) and stage an effectively ridiculous atrocity triggered when the bride prematurely sticks a knife into a cake containing a hunchbacked gunman.

However, when the terrorists get into their spaceship and head for Axturias, and Yarritu kills off the supporting loons, the film abandons its ostensible idea and sticks rather too closely to the plot of James Hadley Chase's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (especially Robert Aldrich's adaptation *The Grissom Gang*). As it straggles across a familiar desert planetscape, *Acción Mutante* even starts to look like one of the dozens of *Mad Max* imitations churned out in the early '80s by Italy, the Philippines or Charles Band.

Isolated images (the smiling dead Siamese twin strung up by a lynch mob while his living brother kicks) recapture the sick humour of the opening; but rather more sequences go beyond black humour into areas of actual nastiness that can in no way be seen as comic – like a retarded child slicing away at Yarritu with a razor-blade, then pouring salt and vinegar into the wounds. Also highly un-funny is the general abuse that Patricia is required to take, ostensibly because of her class (she has her lips stapled together for a long stretch of the film). This seems actually to express a streak of unattractive misogyny – there are notably no female mutants – that co-exists uncomfortably with the editorialising on behalf of the hideous.

Kim Newman

Agantuk (The Stranger)

India/France 1991

Director: Satyajit Ray

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

National Film
Development
Corporation of India
(Bombay)/ Erato Films/
DD Productions/
Soprofilms (Paris)
With the participation
of Canal Plus

Executive Producers

Gérard Depardieu
Daniel Toscan
du Plantier

Producer

Satyajit Ray

Production Supervisor

Anil Chowdhury

Assistant Directors

Ramesh Sen
Subrata Lahiri
Ramen Chatterjee

Screenplay

Satyajit Ray

Director of Photography

Barun Raha

In colour

Camera Operator

Sandip Ray

Editor

Dulal Dutta

Art Director

Ashoke Bose

Music

Satyajit Ray

Music Arrangements

Aloke De

Songs

S. Bannerjee

Costume Design

Lalita Ray

Make-up Artists

Ananta Das

Sound Recordist

Sujit Sarkar

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Hitendra Ghosh

Cast

Dipankar De

Sudhindra Bose

Mamata Shankar

Anila Bose

Deepankar De

Sudhindra Bose

Bikram Bhattacharya

Satyaki/Bablu

Utpal Dutt

Manmohan Mitra

Dhritiman Chatterjee

Prithwish Sen Gupta

Rabi Ghosh

Ranjan Rakshit

Subrata Chatterjee

Chhanda Rakshit

Promode Ganguly

Tridib Mukherjee

Ajit Bannerjee

Sital Sarkar

10,800 feet

120 minutes

Subtitles

Anila Bose, wife of Calcutta executive Sudhindra Bose, receives a letter from her maternal uncle Manmohan Mitra, whom she last saw when she was two years old. Manmohan left home abruptly in 1955, and has since communicated only by occasional postcards from around the world sent to a family friend, Sital Sarkar. Now he writes he will be passing through Calcutta and demands hospitality for a week. Sudhindra, at once suspecting the man may be an impostor, reluctantly agrees to his coming. When Manmohan arrives, he charms Anila and her 11-year-old son Satyaki with his courtesy, good humour and fund of knowledge. He explains he left home to see the world. Anila is inclined to accept him as genuine, but Sudhindra remains suspicious. Manmohan, aware of Sudhindra's doubts, produces his passport, then teasingly points out that passports are easily forged.

Anila recalls that her grandfather, Manmohan's father, had been very fond of his younger son and may have left him something in his will. Sudhindra finds out that there is indeed a large legacy, held by Sital Sarkar as

executor. Reluctant to confront Manmohan himself, he invites to the house an abrasive friend, the barrister Prithwish Sen Gupta, who ends up insulting the old man. Next morning Anila finds Manmohan's room empty. Remorsefully, the family trace Manmohan to Sital Sarkar's house at Santiniketan, then to a nearby village, where they beg his forgiveness. He agrees to return, but asks them first to stay for the local celebrations. During the dancing, Anila joyfully joins in with the village women. The next day Manmohan departs, leaving Sudhindra with a small envelope. Inside is a cheque: he has made over his entire legacy to Anila.

After the heart attack that interrupted filming on *The Home and the World*, Satyajit Ray completed only three more films before his death. His Ibsen adaptation, *An Enemy of the People*, was disappointingly cramped and stiff, and *Branches of the Tree*, though more fluid in execution, felt weighed down by its sombre musings on the corruption poisoning Indian society. But fears of an irreversible creative decline are gratifyingly dispelled by his final film. *Agantuk* is a wise, witty and benevolent work, a worthy sign-off from a great film-maker.

Aptly enough for a farewell performance, *Agantuk* features what looks very like a slyly mocking self-portrait. Manmohan (an engaging, urbane portrayal from Utpal Dutt) shares many of Ray's attributes: the taste for jokes, word-games and the play of ideas, the sceptical eye for the blessings of civilisation and the immediate rapport with children, delighting young Satyaki and his friends with foreign coins, astronomy, and accounts of Machu Picchu. True, Manmohan has spent most of his life abroad, whereas Ray never quit his native Bengal. But it's Manmohan's cosmopolitan stance that makes him an object of suspicion, and throughout his career Ray was accused in some quarters of making films for foreign audiences, of not being a true Indian film-maker.

But if *Agantuk* was conceived as a valedictory film, there's nothing in the least solemn about it. Ray's ironic humour suffuses the action, and there are scenes as funny as any in his output – as when two friends, the actor

Ranjan and his wife Chhanda, are invited to meet the maybe-uncle. Quivering with curiosity, Ranjan (played by Rabi Ghosh, a Ray regular since the 1962 *Abhijan*) commits ever clumsier gaffes the more he strives to be tactful – to Anila's alarm and Manmohan's growing amusement. Here as throughout the film, the satire is tolerant. Even the offensive lawyer Sen Gupta is seen as more blinkered than malicious, and Sudhindra's suspicion and parsimony (not only may Manmohan be a fake, he moans, but he's costing 50 rupees [about £1] a day in food) are no more than gently mocked.

You can't hope to reach the core of the person, Manmohan observes, "by peeling the onion". *Agantuk* is a warning against certainty, against easy and complacent assumptions. Nobody and nothing is truly knowable, and that part of the world that calls itself civilised doesn't by any means have all the answers. But civilisation can't simply be unlearned, sloughed off at will: "Marx, Freud, Tagore are in my blood," Manmohan regretfully admits. "You can't just bring yourself to act like a savage." Even so, Ray suggests, every contact with other perceptions can be a source of joy and enrichment: watching Anila join in the tribal dance, Manmohan murmurs, "I had doubts whether she was really my niece. Now I know." It's not only the stranger whose genuineness has been under test.

The end of Ray's last film takes us back to his starting points. The small Bengali village, where boys play around a giant banyan tree, recalls the world of the young Apu, and nearby Santiniketan where Sital Sarkar lives is also where in the early 40s Ray attended Tagore's pastoral university, the "Abode of Peace" (Ray's mentor, Renoir, sprinkled similar personal references into his own final film, *Le Petit théâtre de Jean Renoir*). After this, it's hard not to see Manmohan Mitra's final gesture as Ray's own legacy, leaving us with the rich inheritance of his films, and of the humanist tradition he himself inherited from Tagore. The stranger's surname was certainly not chosen at random: Mitra, in Hindu mythology, is the god of harmony, the creative principle that brings reconciliation and understanding.

Philip Kemp



Wit and wisdom: Dipankar De, Mamata Shankar

Après l'amour

France 1992

Director: Diane Kurys

Certificate

15

Distributor

Mayfair Entertainment

Production Companies

Alexandre Films/
TF1 Films/Prodeve
With the participation
of Sofiarp/
Investimage 3/
Canal Plus

Executive Producer

Robert Benmussa

Producer

Jean-Bernard Fetoux

Production Co-ordinator

François D'Artemare

Production Manager

Philippe Lièvre

Location Managers

Jean-Jacques Tabah

Frédérique Lauzier-

Parent

2nd Unit Director

Marc Angelo

Casting

Pierre Amzallag

Assistant Directors

Thierry Binisti

Emmanuel Hamon

Screenplay

Diane Kurys

Director of Photography

Fabio Conversi

In colour

Editor

Hervé Schneid

Art Director

Tony Egry

Music

Yves Simon

Serge Perathoner

Jannick Top

Music Adviser

Gilbert Marouani

Music Extracts

"Casta Diva" from

Norma by Vincenzo

Bellini, performed

by the London

Philharmonic

Orchestra,

Montserrat Caballe

Music Performed by

Vocals:

Ann Calvert

Sharon

Guitar:

Lol

Saxophone:

Sebastien Jallier

Keyboards:

Nicolas Neidilardt

Drums:

Jean-Louis Blanchina

Bass:

Michel Galliot

Songs

"Hard to Handle" by

Allen Jones, Alvertis

Isbell, Otis Redding,

performed by Black

Crowes; "The Right

Thing" by Mick

Hucknall, performed

by Simply Red; "Bad

News" by and

performed by Moon

Martin; "Happy

Birthday to You" by

Patty Hill, Mildred Hill;

"L'Etrange Madame X"

by Vincent Scotto;

"Hey Paula" by Ray

Hildebrand; "Blue

Suede Shoes" by Carl

Perkins; "Pretty Love"

by Lol, Jean Dindeneau

Choreography

Chris Gandois

Costume Design

Mic Chemical

Make-up

Paul Le Marinel

Sound Editor

Michèle Boehm

Sound Recordists

Bernard Bats

Claude Villand

Bernard Le Roux

Music:

William Flageollet

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Jérôme Lévy

Pascal Mazière

Dubbing:

Gilbert Crozet

Stunts

Roland Neunreuther

Subtitles

Titra Film

Cast

Isabelle Huppert

Lola

Bernard Giraudeau

David

Hippolyte Girardot

Tom

Lio

Marianne

Yvan Attal

Romain

Judith Reval

Rachel

Ingrid Held

Anne

Laure Killing

Elisabeth

Mehdi Ioussens

Simon

Florian Billon

Olivier

Eva Killing

Caroline

Ana Girardot

Juliette

Jean-Claude de Goros

Langwood

Chrystelle Labaude

Christine

Philippe Chany

Manager

Pierre Amzallag

Babysitter

Renée Amzallag

Rebecca

Jean Grecault

Factory Watchman

Dominique Stablo

Hospital Receptionist

Philippe Yarahe

Birthday Guest

Franco Tonfoni

Concierge

9,457 feet

105 minutes

Subtitles

During her thirtieth birthday party, Lola, a successful novelist, slips outside to make love with her musician lover, Tom, in his car. After the party, Lola and David, the architect she lives with, argue in a desultory fashion. That night, they are woken up by a phone call from David's ex-wife Marianne, who says that one of their children is ill. David rushes over to find that the child is well, but decides to ▶

◀ stay the night with Marianne anyway. Lola is having problems with her latest novel and finds herself day-dreaming exaggerated sequences from her life. She and David are not getting on. She goes to stay with Tom in a hotel while he records a new album. Meanwhile, David falls out with his brother and partner Romain, and is seduced by his secretary. Tom takes Lola to Italy. But when his wife Elisabeth turns up, Tom abandons Lola, who returns to France by herself. She asks David to meet her at the airport but he sends his secretary, who admits to Lola that she slept with David.

Meanwhile, David is dining with Marianne and ends up sleeping with her. Marianne asks David to take their children. The boys move in to Lola and David's apartment where Lola, after initial difficulties, grows to love them. But when Marianne attempts suicide, David and his sons go back to her. Now that she's alone, Lola's lifestyle becomes sloppier and more relaxed. Tom turns up one night and persuades her to accompany him to a hotel, where he claims Elisabeth is being unfaithful to him. A fight ensues and Lola leaves. She writes in her diary that she is still seeing David occasionally and that she is pregnant. She decides to keep the baby. Romain marries his girlfriend. At the wedding, Marianne is friendly towards Lola, David's secretary tries to seduce Romain, and Lola tells Romain about the baby. At Lola's thirty-first birthday party she tells David that she is pregnant and he makes no response. But when it is time to cut the cake, Lola and David have disappeared.

● Diane Kurys' promising career has turned out to be surprisingly patchy. It was four years before she made a follow-up to the hugely successful *Coup de foudre* – and that was the disappointingly rambling *A Man in Love*. *La Baule-les-Pins (C'est la vie)*, her last film, saw a return to form with the chirpy observations of rites of passage reminiscent of her debut feature, *Dia-*

bolo Menthe. This time, however, she's tackled the adult *drame de passion* again – with more success.

As if in search of good omens, Kurys brought back *Coup de foudre* star Isabelle Huppert to play Lola. Huppert as a 30-year-old? That's par for the odd generational course here; it's almost as if Kurys, having written about a group of fortysomethings, had worried about her characters being too old and sliced ten years off their ages. The preoccupations here – love and liberty – seem to be those of children of the 60s, not the more materialist 70s.

That aside, Huppert's calm magnetism serves her well as the successful, self-controlled woman who almost falls apart when not one, but two men leave her. (There's a neat parallel in the good-time girl resonance of her name; in her own, more cerebral way, this solitary Lola also goes for exactly what she wants.) Without labouring the point, the film slips between what other people see in Lola (a controlled, unemotional woman), what she would like to see in herself (in her written flights of fancy), and what we actually see. Huppert pulls off the tricky feat of retaining our interest while dividing our sympathies. While she flits smugly between David and Tom, not even bothering to disguise her telephone conversation with Tom in front of David, or disappearing during her birthday party to have sex with Tom, she is the woman we love to hate – one who takes a kind of careless revenge on what is seen here as an equally cynical *mankind* (after all, David is still secretly seeing Marianne and Tom is cheating on Elisabeth).

And when she is rejected by both of them (each man returning to a 'hysterical' woman in need of protection), Lola appears to have got what she deserves in both senses of the word: punishment and freedom. But this isn't a simple 70s feminist tale of loving and leaving them; Huppert's Lola is at once liberated, miserable and still determined to get her own way – to the

extent that she carries on seeing David as before, except without living with him. If she learns anything, it is that she wants to have a child. An easy way out of the man/woman conundrum, perhaps, but a perfectly acceptable transferral of love.

If Lola is the strong point at the film's centre, everyone else is characterised by weakness, from the brash, arrogant David (weak enough to let himself be seduced by his ex-wife and his secretary) to the gentle, impressionable Romain. But these weaknesses are largely the observations of Lola; for her to be strong, she has to see others as weak. The suggestion is that this is the reason she writes: to make sense of them or contain them by moulding them as she would like them, glamorising situations in glossy black and white versions of reality. (At the same time, Lola's distance can be seen as a sign of her own weakness, and a good example of the ways in which the film gets at the cracks in her armour: in Italy, she is forced into voyeurism, watching Tom and his wife through their window after he has rejected her.) Lola also discovers that despite, or perhaps because of, their weaknesses, others do just fine. Marianne and Elisabeth get what they want by retreating into sickness; the men find the fragile women they seek.

Kurys seems to have learned some lessons from *A Man in Love*: the over-the-top-sexual high jinks, currently characterising Hollywood's 'psychosexual' movies, have been replaced by lower-key verbal encounters. And while the other film churned out ravaged clichés in French, English and Italian, *Après l'amour* seems much more at ease with itself. It copes with agony, bluster, lies and voyeurism in a cynically relaxed spirit that places it firmly in the French 'relationship movie' genre; though with the difference, outdated as it may seem anywhere except in France, that it is a woman through whose eyes we look.

Amanda Lipman

The Baby of Mâcon

United Kingdom/Netherlands/

France/Germany 1993

Director: Peter Greenaway

Certificate

18

Distributor

Electric Pictures
Production Companies
Allarts with UGC
In association with
Cine Electra/
Channel 4/
Filmstiftung
Nordrhein Westfalen/
La Sept Cinéma
Executive Producer
Denis Wigman
Producer
Kees Kasander
Co-producer
Yves Marmion
Line Producers
Christoph Hahnheiser
Frank Henschke
Associate Producers
Roland Wigman
Jean Louis Piel
Pre-production Manager
Karin van der Werff
Production Manager
Debby de Jong
Location Managers
Han Ing Lim
Kerstin Mehle
Casting
Abi Cohen
Audience:
Edith Hazelebach
Assistant Directors
Jeroen Planting
Tanja Daberitz
Screenplay
Peter Greenaway
Director of Photography
Sacha Vierny
Camera Operator
Chris Renson
Editor
Chris Wyatt
Production Designers
Ben van Os
Jan Roelfs
Production Art Department
Wilma Schuemie
Myrte Memelink
Set Dressers
Edu Calicher
Lilian Wadilie
Marien van Os
Joost van Os
Scenic Artist
Todd van Hulzen
Jewellery
Linda Termars
Cobbler
Ilona Koudijs
Calligraphy
Brody
Neuenschwander
Music
Matthew Locke
John Blow
Andreas Clamer
Arcangelo Corelli
Claudio Monteverdi
Giralamo Frescobaldi
Thomas Tallis
Music Performed by
The Locke Consort
Vrouwen Macon Koor
Mannen Macon Koor
Organ:
Jetty Podt
Drums:
Ria Korvet
Martin Gessinck
Richard Immink
Barok Orkest
Concerto, 91
Duits Macon Orkest
Music Consultant
Daniel Reuss

Costume Design

Dien van Straalen
Audience:
Ellen Lens
Make-up Artist
Sara Meerman
Make-up Special Effects
Birger Laube
Titles
Cineco
Sound Editor
Nigel Heath
Foley Editors
Peter Hearn
Tony Fish
Sound Recordists
Garth Marshall
Music:
Paul M. Van Brugge
Tjeerd van Zanen
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recorder
Brian Saunders
Sound Transfers
TBS Köln
Foley Artists
Jack Stew
Diane Greaves

Cast

Julia Ormond
Daughter
Ralph Fiennes
Bishop's Son
Philip Stone
Bishop
Jonathan Lacey
Cosimo Medici
Don Henderson
Father Confessor
Celia Gregory
Mother Superior
Jeff Nuttall
Major Domo
Jessica Stevenson
Kathryn Hunter
Gabrielle Reidy
Midwives
Frank Egerton
Prompter
Phelim McDermott
Leslie Cuss
Tutors
Tony Vogel
Father
Tatiana Strauss
Louisa Milwood Haigh
Nuns
Anna Niland
Wetnurse
Graham Valentine
Famine
Diana van Kolck
Mother
Rien Kroon
Chaplain
Jan Sepers
Carpaccio
Nils Dorando
The Baby of Mâcon
Richard Blair
Tony Dunham
Soldiers
Humphrey Sallons
Cosimo's Servant
Dennis Rudge
Hans Bosch
Sjoerd Ghijsen
Michiel Riedijk
Entourage Servants
Bert Sevenhuijsen
The Deacon

10,961 feet
122 minutes



Agony, bluster and lies: Hippolyte Girardot, Isabelle Huppert

● A masque is performed in a provincial theatre in the 1650s: it tells of a community suffering a plague of barrenness, which is felt to be attributable to religious laxity. By allowing the Cathedral of Mâcon to fall into disrepair, the townspeople have provoked divine wrath.

After a prologue – read by Famine – a balding, elderly woman, apparently well past child-bearing age, gives birth to a healthy, cherubic boy. The mother is quickly shunted to one side, and one of her daughters, a beautiful, virginal 18-year-old, assumes the role of Madonna, proclaiming that this was indeed a miracle birth. She realizes there is a fortune to be made from exploiting the child. Wealthy, infertile women are prepared to pay merely to touch the infant; the daughter holds court, inviting supplicants to prostrate themselves in front of the baby, and offers the child's blessing in return for whatever gifts the supplicants can provide. These range from a white cow, given her by the aristocrat Cosimo Medici, to money and gold. All the while, the prompter, sitting in his box beside the stage, provides a voice for the child. The daughter announces she expects wealth and good fortune, but the prompter offers her only pain and death. She has already betrayed her family, imprisoning her mother and bribing her father to keep quiet.

At a magnificent banquet held to celebrate the birth, the daughter tries to seduce the Bishop's son, a handsome but priggish young sceptic who is loath to believe in the miracle. She lures him to a barn beneath the stage, but just as the couple are about to consummate their relationship, the child appears in a halo of golden light, and Cosimo's cow gores the Bishop's son to death. The Bishop and his entourage declare the daughter is an unfit mother. The child is taken into the protection of the church, which exploits him even more provocatively than before, selling off the baby's spittle and urine as fertility aids.

To revenge herself, the jealous daughter smothers the babe as it lies in its cradle in the Cathedral. She knows that local law prevents the execution of virgins, and thinks she can get away with impunity. But Cosimo suggests she be taken to the guardhouse. Here, the militia, forgiven in advance, can rape her, and 217 soldiers are assigned the task. The line between fiction and reality collapses as the actors playing the militia actually rape the actress playing the daughter, and she dies a horrendous death. The daughter's family are also executed.

Cosimo feels guilt for the barbarity of the punishment, but is mollified by his entourage, and takes a full part in the child's funeral in the Cathedral. Here the locals, avid for trophies and relics, strip and mutilate the child's body, cutting off his feet and hands. Famine and sterility return.

● Early in this nativity play-within-a-film, a doddering prelate peers under the skirts of a young, would-be



In bed with Madonna: Dorando, Ormond

Madonna, trying to ascertain whether or not she is a virgin, but comes out stumped. "I don't know what I'm supposed to be looking for," he says. His confusion is likely to be shared by audiences as they survey the picture as a whole. An unwieldy mix of Mariolatry and *grand guignol* drama, played out on a single, massive set where audience and performers assemble for an Inigo Jones-style masque, *The Baby of Mâcon* sags under the weight of its director's innumerable hobby-horses. Among the welter of themes Peter Greenaway tackles are voyeurism, Brechtian role playing, religious guilt, the links between church, theatre and cinema, the commodification of miracles, and the exploitation of babies. As usual, he crams his *tableaux vivants* full of arcane visual puns and allusions to Renaissance painting. Costume and production design are typically sumptuous: Sacha Vierny's widescreen, deep-focus photography catches plenty of bawdy incident at the edges and background of the frame. Still, one has the nagging suspicion that most scenes would have worked better as photographs or paintings, to be contemplated at leisure, than as moving images. Over the past couple of years, Greenaway has been organizing exhibitions everywhere from Rotterdam to Vienna, and it seems he is having some difficulty shaking off his curatorial habits.

While *The Baby of Mâcon* disappoints by comparison with its predecessor *Prospero's Books*, boasting neither a central performance to match Gielgud's nor much of that film's technological wizardry, there is no gainsaying the virtuosity with which it is crafted. It hardly deserved its frosty reception at Cannes this year, where it was excluded from the main competition. Perhaps part of its problem is the lack of a central, Magus-like figure through whom Greenaway can filter his ideas. Gielgud's Prospero fulfilled this role to perfection, speaking every other character's lines for them, and aping the omnipotent auteur Greenaway apparently aspires to be. Pulling the strings behind the scenes on *The Baby of Mâcon*, there is only a humble prompter, who pipes out the baby's lines in a reedy voice, but he is little more than a commentator. Apart from him, there is the pious hypocrite, Cosimo Medici, the most honoured guest in the audience. One of the Medici clan who ruled Florence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Cosimo was renowned for his cruelty. Depicted here as a young

man whose character is not fully formed, he is perhaps the most interesting figure in the film, torn between his fervent religious beliefs and his snobbery and sadism. But the director isn't much concerned with exploring his twisted psychology.

Pauline Kael once accused Greenaway of regarding a movie as "a set of theorems to be demonstrated by tableaux." Her remark is borne out by *The Baby of Mâcon*. Arguably, there has always been something monstrously detached about Greenaway's work, a cold, formalist quality which suggests he has absolutely no feeling for his characters. The impression of authorial hauteur is heightened by his relish for anatomizing and re-moulding the human body. Here, we see a dead baby chopped into bits, its hands and feet sawn off by a rabble keen to exploit its 'miracle' birth; a horrendous rape scene; a young priest having his intestines gouged out by an angry cow in a weird skit on the nativity. We see bodies of every description: the flaccid, corpulent middle-aged dignitaries; a parade of wet nurses baring their breasts; the pock-marked bodies of the poor family locked away beneath the stage; the heaving, grotesque sight of the elderly mother in labour. A noisy, rumbustious audience is packed into the theatre to watch the drama unfold, and the film comes replete with scenes of celebration and carnival; but these are short on any sense of Rabelaisian joy or energy.

The styles of acting vary enormously. The Artaudian intensity of the naked wretch who intones the prologue is belied by the rough and ready amateur dramatic style of much of the supporting cast who, after all, are supposed to be acting in an amateur drama. The portentous dialogue doesn't help. Ralph Fiennes is well cast as the uptight priest's son whose religious convictions are confused by his lust for the supposed virgin-mother. Julia Ormond, as the teenage Madonna, combines coquetry and beatific innocence to good effect. And Jonathan Lacey is ideal as the fussy, periwigged Cosimo.

The divisions between drama and 'reality' are perplexing. It is hard to fathom who are characters in the audience, and who are playing parts in the masque. Presumably this blurring of distinctions is deliberate and Greenaway is asking us to question our own roles as spectators. But it is scarcely the most novel of conceits: Brecht, Godard and a host of others have already covered this territory quite adequately. Greenaway can't resist shock tactics: as the film draws to an end, the actors playing the militia become so carried away with their roles that they rape the virgin mother while the rabble mutilate the dead baby. These two acts of brutality mark a grim, repulsive finale to an uneven film which, for all its formal excellence, is a major let-down. *The Baby of Mâcon* is as close to a formulaic picture as Greenaway could come to making.

Geoffrey Macnab

Benny's Video

Austria/Switzerland 1992

Director: Michael Haneke

Certificate

18

Distributor

ICA

Production Company

Wega Film (Vienna)/
Bernard Lang AG
(Zurich)
With financial support
from the Austrian
Film Fund/
Austrian Television
(Film Television
Agreement)/
The Vienna Film Fund
(in association with the
Austrian Volksbank
AG)/Swiss Department
of the Interior/Swiss
Television DRS

Producers

Veit Heiduschka
Bernard Lang
Production Managers
Michael Katz
Gebhard Zupan
Egypt:
Nabil Shazli
Switzerland:
Anne Catherine Lang

Location Managers

Peter Ecker
Egypt:
Affaf Fawzi

Assistant Directors

Christian Wolf
Alfred Strobl

Screenplay

Michael Haneke

Director of Photography

Christian Berger

In colour

Video Operator

Gerhard Stüttler

Editor

Marie Homolkova

Production Designer

Christoph Kanter

Set Decorators

Christian Schuster
Friedrich Martan

Set Dressers

Robert Köstl
Hans Wagner

Special Effects

Will Neuner

Music Extracts

"Trotz dem alten
Drachen", "Jesu,
meine Freude",
"Liebster Jesu,
wir sind hier" by
Johann Sebastian Bach
Costume Design
Erika Navas
Wardrobe Supervisor
Bettina Leidl
Susie Menegher
Lydia Polak
Make-up
Giacomo Peier
Sound Recordist/
Sound Re-recorder
Karl Schlifflner
Dolby stereo
Sound Effects
Mel Kutbay

Cast

Arno Frisch
Benny
Angela Winkler
Mother
Ulrich Mühle
Father
Ingrid Stassner
Young Girl
Stephanie Brehme
Stefan Polasek
Christian Pundy
Max Berner
Hanspeter Müller
Shelley Kästner

9,880 feet

110 minutes

Subtitles

● Vienna. 15-year-old Benny uses his camcorder to record various events, such as the brutal slaying of a pig, and a business party hosted by his sister Evi at the family home where he lives with his parents. He watches the tapes and rented action videos in his bedroom, which is full of audio-visual equipment, including cameras trained on the room and the road outside. He also listens to speed metal and draws geometric shapes, the only homework he seems to do.

During school choir practice, drugs and money are surreptitiously passed from boy to boy. At the video rental shop, Benny sees a girl of about his age he has noticed before and invites her home while his parents are away for the weekend. After clumsy attempts to make conversation, Benny shows her the gun used in the slaughter of the pig, pressing it to his stomach and daring her to fire. When she in turn dares him, he fires, seriously wounding her. Shocked, Benny reloads the gun and fires twice, killing the girl. The murder and Benny's subsequent mopping up of the girl's blood ►

◀ are all captured by his camcorder.

Benny goes out to a club with a friend but hesitates to tell him what has happened. The following day, he wanders around town, goes to the cinema and, on a whim, has his head shaved. Back home, his skinhead haircut meets with disapproval from his father. The next day, after being dismissed from class for punching a friend, he plays his mother and father the tape of the girl's murder. Benny's mother agrees to her husband's suggestion that they should cut up the body and dispose of it at the farm. Benny and his mother then take a plane to Egypt, where they video all the tourist spots and Benny records a video diary.

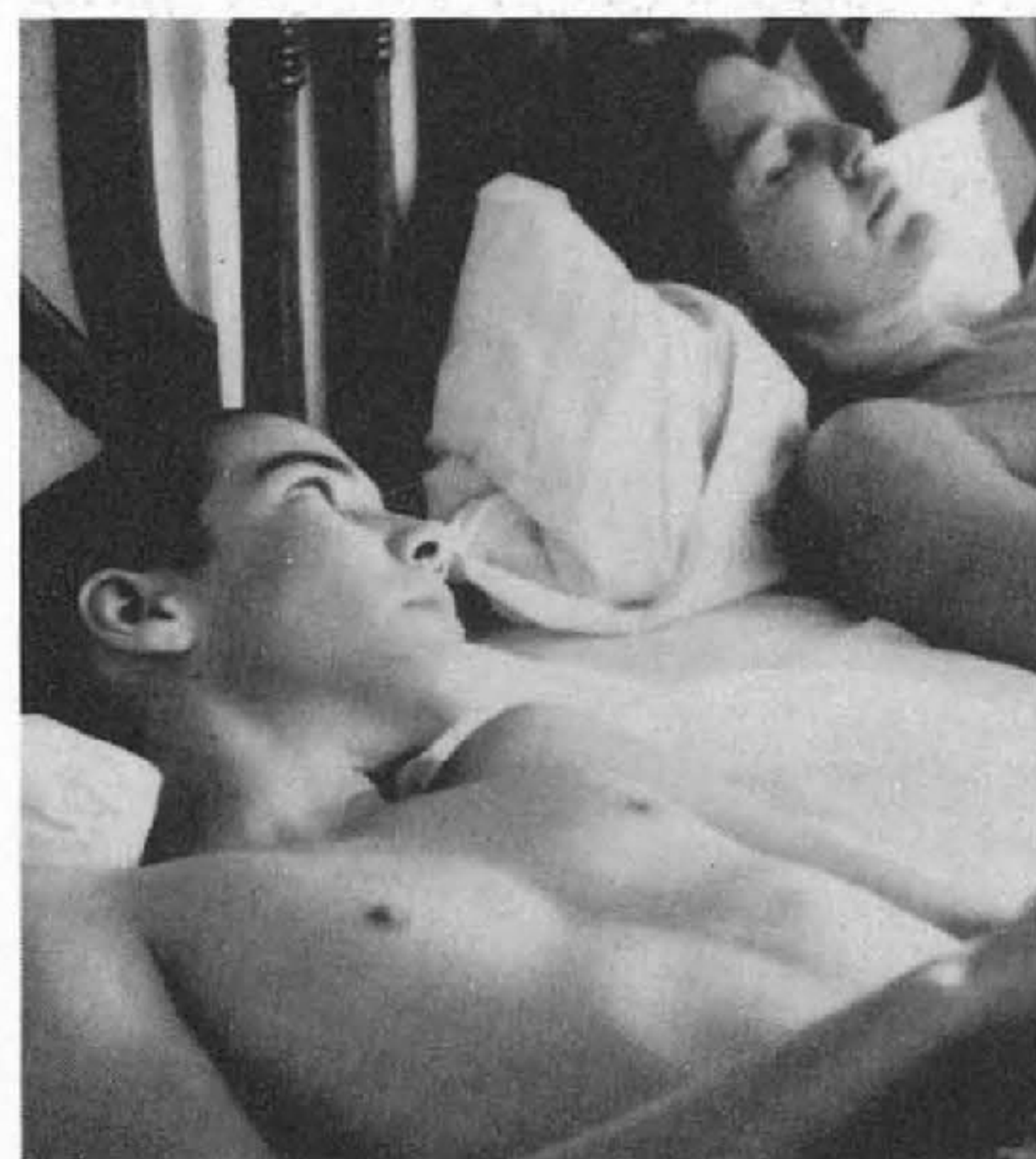
Back in Vienna, Benny grows closer to his mother and father, who make an effort to understand him and his sister. Later, however, Benny plays to a police officer a tape of a conversation between his parents the night they learned of the murder. They are arrested; viewed on the police station's closed circuit TV, Benny goes past them and apologises.

● A skilfully made and disquieting film, *Benny's Video* is also unusually oppressive. Director Haneke has described the trilogy of which this film is the second part (*The Seventh Continent*, made in 1988, was the first) as "reports on the progressive emotional glaciation of my country". Polemic might be a better word than report, since the story of Benny works itself out as if illustrating a thesis.

Benny could be a case study. His family is well off; both parents work and he is largely left to his own devices. Contact between parents and son is minimal and Benny spends his spare time watching violent action movies and listening to speed metal – he is even shown eating a McDonalds. Haneke makes it clear that Benny is not abnormal; like many other kids, he is emotionally stunted, hooked on cheap, manipulative imagery.

The situation thus set up, we see the results. Benny might be an expert in violent films and in operating gadgetry, but he has no idea how to talk to the girl he eventually kills. It is not too outlandish to view Benny's turning to the gun as a way of sustaining communication, as a macabre chat-up line. Once he has the gun in his hand – and we are surely meant to note the influence of the violent films he has absorbed – he advances the action in the traditional way. He later explains to his father that he shot the girl "to see what it's like." The impact of real pain genuinely shocks him and he is driven to finish the job by an urge to stop the hurt. He later films the corpse and himself, perhaps in an attempt to make the act as remote as the deaths he is accustomed to seeing on screen.

Compared to other recent films examining the relationship between "real" violence and images of it, *Benny's Video* is relatively straightforward. The film-within-a-film structure of *Man Bites Dog*, for example, renders voyeurism problematic. Haneke, however,



Family values: Arno Frisch, Angela Winkler

makes more basic connections: the films Benny watches have had a damaging influence; the camcorder he uses has replaced "real" experience.

However, this simplistic determinism is realised by expertly controlled technique. There is little light in the film, either literally – skies and places are grey, Benny's room is black – or in the relentlessly humourless tone. The settings are all claustrophobic – Benny's bedroom in particular gives the impression of being a sealed area. The only escape into light and space is the unreal one brought about by Benny and his mother's flight to Egypt, partly recorded on video. The overall effect is that of a narrow tunnel along which the plot guides us with grim, remorseless logic.

Another significant feature of Haneke's approach is his refusal of spectacle. Two of the most effective and chilling scenes happen off-stage. We only hear the girl dying and being shot, while Benny runs across the picture; and his parents' incriminating conversation, second time around, is played over a shot of Benny's room, the location of the listening camcorder. Benny and his video are the most graphic example of perverted relationships in a film that is as much social critique as examination of the habits and behaviour of an adolescent influenced by certain sorts of imagery. Haneke, who until *The Seventh Continent* worked in television and the theatre, is preoccupied with the way communication can be replaced by exchanges of money and consumption. In fact, it is in the camera's repeated focusing on cash changing hands – as well as in the plot's thudding demonstration of Benny quickly learning from his sister's money-spinning plan – that *Benny's Video* is least subtle. Benny's parents are seen as representatives of this corrupt order, and the movie exacts revenge by chewing them up with a dramatically satisfying force.

After the murder, Benny's attempt to publicly mark himself as a wrongdoer by shaving his head and having himself dismissed from school is undermined by his parents' erasure of what happened. In the final twist, with the camcorder getting the last say in the replaying of the parents' taped conversation, it is Benny who asserts the reality of the killing and reinstates some moral authority.

Robert Yates

Chain of Desire

USA 1992

Director: Temistocles Lopez

Certificate
18

Distributor
Mainline Pictures

Production Company
Distant Horizon

Executive Producer
Anant Singh

Producer
Brian Cox

Associate Producers
Mickey Cottrell

Doug Lindeman

Sudhir Pragee

Sanjeev Singh

Production Co-ordinator
Ingrid Rudefors

Production Manager
George Moffly

Unit Location Manager
Eddy Collins

Post-production Supervisor
Paul Janssen

Post-production Co-ordinator
Risa Koren

Casting
Andrea Stone

Guttfreund

Laurel Smith

Assistant Directors
Tom Willey

Risa Koren

Linda Wilson

Screenplay
Temistocles Lopez

Director of Photography
Nancy Schreiber

Colour
Technicolor

Camera Operator
Nancy Schreiber

Steadicam Operator
David Emmerichs

Video
Charles Jeremovic

Graphic Design
Rosalind Lurie

Editor
Suzanne Fenn

Production Designer
Scott Chambliss

Art Director
Michael Shaw

Set Decorator
Judy Becker

Music/Music Director
Nathan Birnbaum

Music performed by
Piano/Accordion:

Amasa Miller

Bass/Vocals:

Cornell Williams

Drums:

Raymond Weber

Tenor/Alto Sax:

Boney James

Keyboards:

Nathan Birnbaum

Music Producers
Mark Bingham

Nathan Birnbaum

Music Supervisor/
Music Editor

Jeffrey Kimball

Music Co-ordinator
Kevin Frech

Songs
"Games of Desire"

by Nathan Birnbaum,

Colin Gorman,

performed by Linda

Fiorentino; "Steal

Blue", "Turn This

Mutha Out" by

The Basement Boys,

Daryll Mandrill Harris,

performed by 33-1/3

Queen; "Chicken

Noodling" by and

performed by

Douglas J. Cuomo;

"El Abado"(traditional)

performed by

Missionary Choir,

Nick Olivo, Brian

Chester; "Blenheim

Chorale" by and

performed by Nathan

Birnbaum; "Turkey

Noodling" by and

performed by Douglas

J. Cuomo; "Macho

Perez" by M. Jimenez,

performed by Hector

Tricoche; "Dile A El"

by Pedro Azael,

performed by Ulises

Marcel; "Arado y Trigo"

by Manuel Zea,

performed by Ulises

Marcel; "Big Boys"

by Alexandra Forbes,

Jeff Franzel, performed

by Linda Fiorentino;

"So Hard to Know"

by Roxanne Seeman,

Rique Pantoja,

performed by Rique

Pantoja, Chet Baker;

"Swimming Pool Blue"

by Rachele Garniez,

performed by Mumbo

Gumbo; "In This Town"

by and performed

by Robbie Evans;

"Cajun Dance" by

Tom Pomposello,

Art Labriola,

performed by Oil

Can; "Feel the Wind"

by and performed by

Ora B. Nance; "Sex in

this Century" by

Temistocles Lopez,

Alexandra Forbes,

Nathan Birnbaum,

Shannon Hamann,

performed by Dewey

Weber; "Blow 'em

Out Like Candles"

by Cito B & The God

Squad, performed

by The God Squad;

"Outcast Lament",

"Short Wave" by

and performed

by Mark Bingham;

"All Dressed Up"

by Steven Strauss,

performed by Connie

Champagne; "I Love

Too Much", "I Ain't

Lonely" by Stefanie

Naifeh, Paul Lacques,

performed by

The Underthings;

"Don't Ask Me Why"

by Stefanie Naifeh,

performed by

The Underthings;

"World Fantasy"

by Art Labriola,

Cy Curnin, performed

by Cy Curnin;

"Mr. Echo" by Chris

Burke, Dan Burke,

performed by

Bloodbank;

"Ecstasy Energy"

by Daniel Dearing,

Mark Kamins,

performed by

Dee Danie Dee;

"Der Kindertotanz"

by Peter Laurence

Gordon, performed

by Peter Gordon &

Love of Life Orchestra;

"Brazilian Sketch"

by and performed

by John Dentino;

"Tourist Season!

Theme" by and

performed by Jason

Brandenberg;

"A Stranger on Earth"

by Sid Feller, Rick

Ward, performed

by Linda Fiorentino

Choreography

Karole Armitage

Costume Design

Pilar Limosner

Wardrobe Supervisor

Michael Clancy

Make-up Artist

Suzanne Willett

Titles/Opticals

Videart Opticals

Supervising Sound Editor

Bernard Hajdenberg

Sound Editors

Denis Fierman

Brian Langman

Sound Recordist

Joe Romano

Sound Re-recordist

Michael Barry

Cast

Linda Fiorentino

Alma D'Angeli

Elias Koteas

Jesus

Angel Aviles

Isa

Patrick Bauchau

Jerald Buckley

Grace Zabriskie

Linda Bailey

Malcolm McDowell

Hubert Bailey

Jamie Harrold

Keith

Tim Guinee

Ken

Dewey Weber

David Bango

Holly Marie Combs

Diana

Seymour Cassel

Mel

Assumpta Serna

Cleo

Kevin Conroy

Joe

Suzanne Douglas

Angie

Joseph McKenna

MC

Karole Armitage

Michael Puleo

Rachel Tucker

Alicia Ho

Edward Jenkins

Dancers

Iraida Polanco

Woman in Church

Joshua Kaplan

Boy in Church

Antonia Rey

Jesus' Mother

Teodora Bello

Santera

Mickey Cottrell

Procureur

Sabrina Lloyd

Diana's Friend in

Gallery

York Bergin

Tommy

Todd Bailey

Boy in Window

Sarah Newhouse

Girl at Ticket Counter

Edgar Omedo Sanel

John Schnall

Radio Announcers

Brooks Roger

Sgt. Langdon (All the

Pres' Women)

Lynn Frazen-Cohen

Gloria Insberg (All the

Pres' Women)

Rica Martens

Woman in Pearls (All

the Pres' Women)

Ebony Jo-Ann

the next day. The friend turns out to be Alma. She is preparing to go on stage at the club when her ex-lover, Michael, calls to say that he has tested positive for HIV. No-one knows how many of the 14 others are at risk. Reluctantly Alma sings and tells her audience, "have a wonderful time".

● *Chain of Desire* adheres in structure to *La Ronde*, Max Ophüls' 1950 adaptation of Arthur Schitzler's merry-go-round of alienated love. Temistocles Lopez's inspiration is to turn the 'round' into a cautionary tale about AIDS by revealing – at the end of the film – that the first in the chain of desire is HIV positive. Despite repeated references to safe sex and two of the characters' participation in an 'Undercounting AIDS Kills' demonstration, the film leaves unsaid how many on the chain have been infected, although it is clear that the majority, by deceiving their partners about their second lover, are at risk.

This yields a more original exploration of desire than the film's steamy billing suggests. Lopez comments on voyeurism, alienation, trust, commitment and transgression as well as deception; he avoids the stereotyping found in comparable movies, particularly gender stereotyping; and replaces Ophüls' post-war nostalgia with a cynical humour, a preoccupation with desires labelled 'abnormal', and a determination to 'tell all' about sex rather than leave its detail to the imagination. But Lopez's skill in dissecting them is markedly uneven.

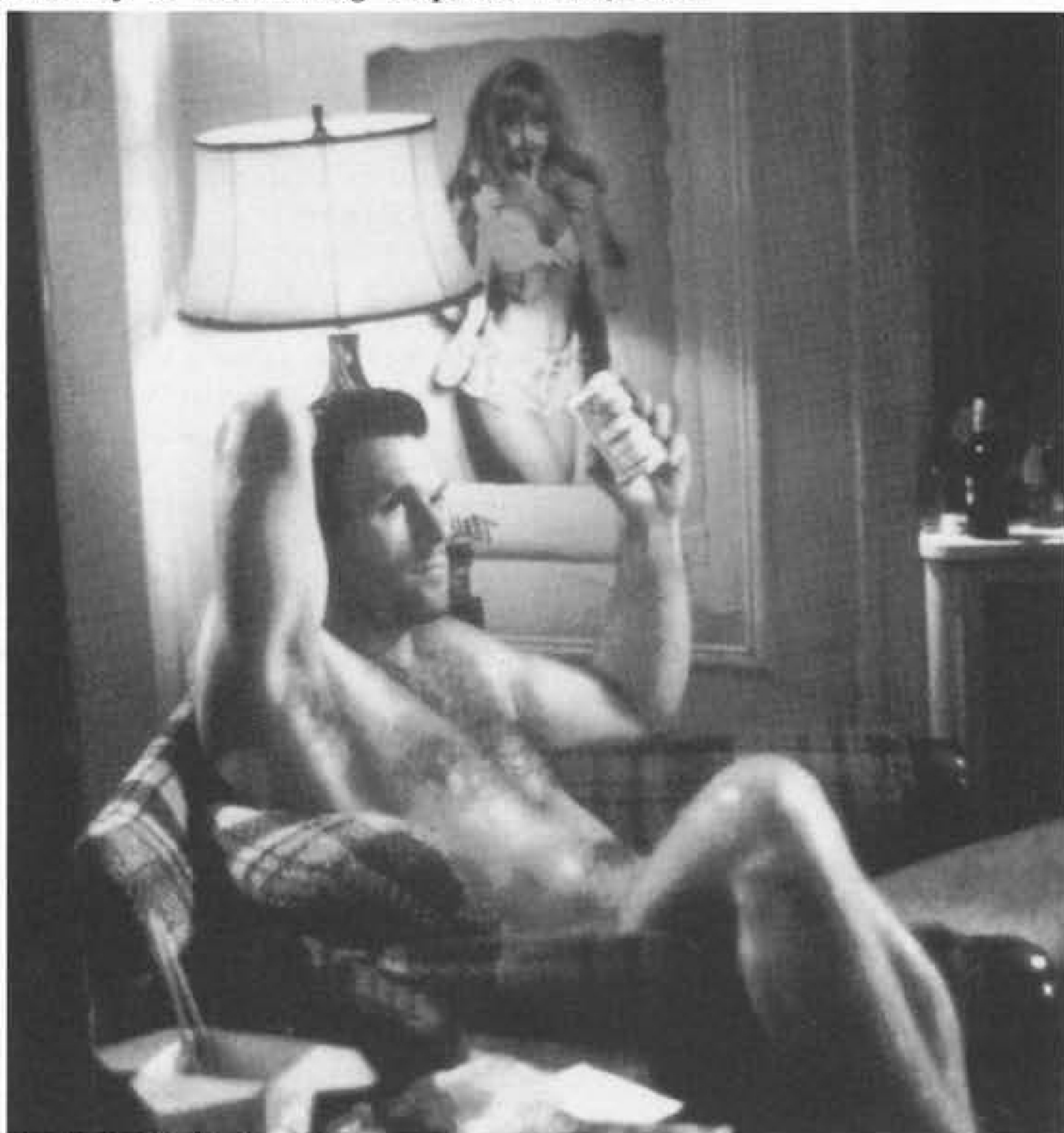
A shorter film might have been more apt for the episodic structure, and might have conveyed more effectively the quite simple message that it carries – do not deceive your partner. The trouble with this structure is the difficulty of maintaining suspense,

insight and depth of character; in the first 20 minutes Lopez does not manage this. The encounters between Alma, Jesus, Isa and Gerald are as lacking in depth and clichéd in their resolutions as scenes from a crude sex steamer for the sell-through market. Only when Grace Zabriskie enters as Gerald's would-be maid does Lopez really begin to thrash out the emotional and social sources of his characters. When Malcolm McDowell enters as Linda's husband, quite an interesting story unfolds, and we become immersed in a complex network of well-observed phobias about communication, trust and truth held by some interesting and unusual personalities.

From here on, Lopez's characterisation and social commentary improve, although the film remains somewhat diffuse, and the sequences involving Keith have a hurried and clichéd feel. But Lopez has an impressive cast; Holly Marie Combs as the incomparably cool Diana and Seymour Cassel as the pathetically charming menopausal painter really bring the script to life (Mel promises to give Diana the "full Lolita treatment" in return for her questionable virginity).

The dry humour bites, but Lopez's direction is less than inspired, with frequent recourse to talking heads, repetitive two-shots, and cluttered frames which take little advantage of the screen and often miss the emotional centre. But the cuts from one sequence to the next work well, and Nancy Schreiber's lighting redresses some of the film's lack of imagination. Nevertheless the direction improves as the film progresses and the sequence involving Joe, Angie and a stranger is not only beautifully shot, lit and acted but raises pertinent questions about safe sex, fantasy and voyeurism.

Emily Caston



The missing link: Kevin Conroy

Daughters of the Dust

USA 1991

Director: Julie Dash

Certificate
PG

Distributor
BFI

Production Company
Geechee Girls
In association with
American Playhouse,
WMG
With financial
assistance from PBS,
Corporation for Public
Broadcasting, National
Endowment for the
Arts, Chubb Group

Executive Producer
Lindsay Law
Producers
Julie Dash
Arthur Jafa
Line Producer
Steven Jones

Associate Producers
Pamm R. Jackson
Floyd Webb
Bernard Nicolas
Production Controller
Kathy Richter

Production Co-ordinator
Teresa Yarbrough
Production Manager
Steven Jones
Location Manager
Eric Mofford

Post-production Supervisor
Amy Carey
Casting
Len Hunt
Assistant Directors
C.C. Barnes
Nandi Bowe
Miller Tobin
Larry Meistrich

Screenplay
Julie Dash
Director of Photography
Arthur Jafa
In colour

Camera Operators
Arthur Jafa
N'jia Kai
Editors
Amy Carey
Joseph Burton

Production Designer
Kerry Marshall
Art Director
Michael Kelly Williams
Set Dresser
Ricardo M. Butler

Special Effects
Black Eagle Special
Effects Co
Willard Stevens
Music
John Barnes

Music Performed by
African
Percussions/Vocals:
Jesus Pedro Orta
Menge Hernandez
Francis Awe
Bill Summers
Elo

Eastern Percussionists:
Manoocheher Sadeghi
Ashhad Khan
Vocalists:
Rosa Parrilla
Valentina Soares
Abiola

Dianne Richburg
Felicidad
Yvette Bostic
Radhaz
Hanif Noor
Mohammed
Allen Fovary II
Micki Butler

**African Percussions/
Vocals Co-ordinator**
Bill Summers

Costume Design
Arlene Burks
Wardrobe Supervisor
Dana Campbell

Make-up Supervisor
Rose Chatterton
Titles/Opticals
Atlanta Film Effects
John E. Allen Inc.

Supervising Sound Editor
Michael Payne
Sound Editors
Dialogue:
Ingeborg Larson
Melissa Peabody

ADR Editor
Kris Campbell
Sound Recordists
Veda Campbell
Music:
Jack Rouben
Ultra stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Jeremy Hoenack
Robert Manahan
Melissa Sherwood
Hofman
Sound Effects Editors
Doug Blush
Ray Greene
Sabrina Stephenson
Jeff Schiro
Joseph Zappala

ADR Voices
Afemo Omilani
Taira Miller
Walla Group
Holiday Marble
Sparkle Duncan
Teddy Gross
Guadalupe Jones
Rudy Costa
Agusta Stone
Charles Burnett
Geraldine Dunston

Consultants
Gullah Language:
Ronald Daise
Historical:
Margaret Washington-Creel

Cast
Cora Lee Day
Nana Peazant
Alva Rogers
Eula Peazant
Barbara-O
Yellow Mary Peazant
Trula Hoosier
Trula

Umar Abdurrahman
Bilal Muhammed
Adisa Anderson
Eli Peazant
Kaycee Moore
Haagar Peazant
Eartha D. Robinson
Myown Peazant
Bahmi Turpin
Iona Peazant
Cheryl Lynn Bruce
Viola Peazant
Tommy Hicks
Mr Snead
Malik Farrakhan
Newlywed Man
Cornell Royal
Daddy Mac Peazant
Vertamae Grosvenor
Hair Braider
Sherry Jackson
Older Cousin
Reverend Ervin Green
Baptist Minister
Marcus Humphrey
Bernard Wilson
Boatmen
Althea Lang
Newlywed Woman
Catherine Tarver
Woman with Baby
Jasmine Lee
Dalisia Robinson
Peazant Babies

Willie Faulkner
Joe Taylor
Frank Brown
Rueben Frapp
Peazant Men
Derrick Coaxum
Neil Howard
Peazant Boys
Jared Warren
Zenovia Green
Taira Miller
Tiffany Hills
Peazant Children
Jabario Cuthbert
Ninnyjugs
Yolanda Simmons
Ebony Hills
Teenage Girls
Jamar Freeman
Pete
Detrell Freeman
Re-Pete
Vivian Dawson
Inez Griffin
Rice Huskers
Kai-Lynn Warren
Unborn Child
Geraldine Dunston
Viola's Mother
M. Cochise Anderson
St Julien Lastchild
Darrel Cook
Julius Cook
Moss Gatherers
Benjamin Gillens
Minister's Assistant
Ronald Daise
Processional Man
Marie Smalls
Woman Being Baptised

Longie Moon
DeWitt Parker
Emma Robinson
Taylor Thompson
Virginia Green
Maceo Griffin
Archie Thomas
Raymond Paige
Ervena Faulkner
J.R. Wilson
Wilhemina Wilson
Baptismal Procession
Tarell Brown
Shanna Parker
Belle White
Stanley White
Maxine Royale
Georgia Wiggins
Carolyn Garis
Ella Powell
Bernice Jenkins
Lillian Johnson
Jackie Parker
Indigo Plantation
Sharria Johnson
Young Nana Peazant
Leroy Simmons Jr
Young Daddy Mac
Leroy Simmons
Shad Peazant

10,083 feet
112 minutes
Partly Subtitled

1902. The Sea Islands of Georgia, home to an African-American Gullah family. On the instigation of Haagar Peazant, various members of the Peazant family prepare to move to the mainland and the North. The move is resisted by Nana Peazant, the family's great-grandmother, who is custodian of their African past. On the eve of their departure, Viola Peazant, a cousin who went to the mainland to train as a Baptist missionary, arrives on the island accompanied by Mr Snead, a photographer she has hired to make a record of the day. Also in the boat is Yellow Mary Peazant, who has been working as a prostitute, and her companion, Trula. The moment of migration is an upheaval for all concerned. The young Iona Peazant receives a note from her lover, the Native American St Julien Lastchild, who pleads with her to stay. Eula, another of the daughters, is pregnant. She has recently been raped by the plantation owner, who lives on the mainland, and her husband Eli is convinced that the child that she is carrying is not his. Nana berates him for his possessive attitude, but also puts her trust in him to keep the family together in the North.

The day before the migration, the family gather for a picnic on the beach. One of the elders teaches the children the rudiments of the Gullah language. Yellow Mary and Trula arrive to be greeted with general contempt. Eula, however, seeks out their company. The spirit of Eula's unborn child cavorts with her future family, and whispers to Eli that she really is his child. Yellow Mary recounts how she lost her own child and became a prostitute. Nana delves into her can full of touchstones to the past. Viola and Haagar, for different reasons, berate her for her superstitious ideas. Nana evokes the history ▶

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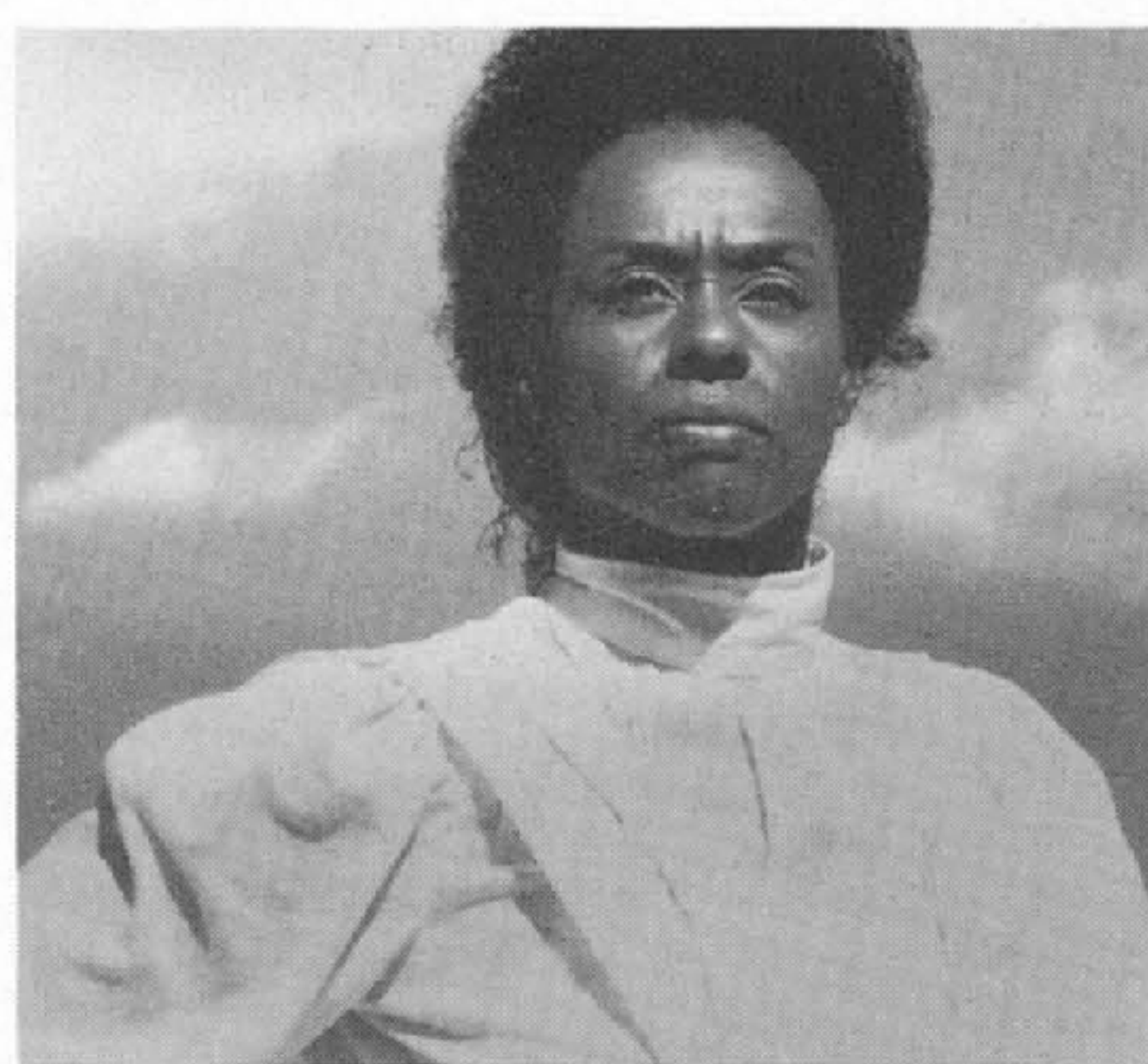
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◀ of the island's people; her mother was sold into slavery, and she is the first generation to be free. Eula recalls the story of a group of Africans brought captive to the island, who turned around and walked on water back to Africa.

Later, Nana makes a talisman to give to those travelling to the North, to connect them to the island. The animosity towards Yellow Mary finally bubbles to the surface. When Nana presents her talisman to her family, Haagar walks off in disgust. But the others, including Viola, accept Nana's gift. The following day, those who are joining the migration gather by the boats. Just as Iona is about to embark, St Julien Lastchild arrives on horseback. Much to the disapproval of Haagar, she elects to stay with him. The company sails away. Nana bids farewell to them, and is joined by Yellow Mary, Eula and Eli who have also chosen to stay behind.

● Julie Dash started making notes for *Daughters of the Dust* in 1975, while she was a fellow at the American Film Institute. Originally conceived as a silent short with intertitles, over the years the idea evolved into a feature. *Daughters of the Dust* was finally knitted together out of love and determination almost palpable in its glowing, varied textures and use of many languages. It draws not only on the Gullah dialect, the West African-derived language of the islands, but on a vocabulary of physical gestures – from the secret signing that the men practise together to the games of the children in their white linen frocks as they kick sand on the beach. And John Barnes' sweeping score provides another level of dense meaning. This is balletic, operatic cinema, and a celebration of cinema itself. Mr Snead the photographer brings a kaleidoscope to the island with him; rather than a record of images taken by a camera, *Daughters of the Dust* is filmed through that magical kaleidoscope. Arthur Jafa's sensuous cinematography is vibrant with colour and movement – as in the slow-motion image of a young girl leaping, her braided locks tossed in the air.

Daughters of the Dust sets out to revoke the colonial history that has obscured the Peazant family. It is a rites-of-passage story that summons myriad rituals and traditions, from Islam, Christianity and the West African spiritual customs that the reformist Haagar describes as Nana's "voodoo mess", to the preparing and eating of gumbo. But the film itself also has a formal grace that is moving and profound. It is structured around the twin narratives of Nana, who remembers her mother being taken away into slavery, and that of the gambolling Unborn Child, a strategy which folds in the old with the new. These two voices circle the story. Indeed, from Nana's opening incantation – "I am the first and the last... I am the silence that you can not understand. I am the utterance of my name" – *Daughters of the Dust* establishes this notion of interweaving and contradiction out of



Scars like armour: Kaycee Moore

which new meanings emerge. This extends to the resolution: there is no right or wrong choice governing the decision to leave the island – Nana's and Haagar's arguments are given equal weight.

The film also transforms narrative in its story-telling technique. The history of the Peazant family, which is typical of the Gullah families, is told through snatches of conversation between the women, who are all, like Nana, eloquent guardians of their culture. They tell of the mythical Ibo landing, in which a boat-load of West Africans were said to have walked home over water rather than be taken captive; or of the reasons for children being given names such as Myown and Iona (*I own her*). And there are accounts of suffering – the rape of Eula by a white landowner signifies the manifold rapes in the African-American's history of captivity, while Eula's refusal to tell Eli the identity of the perpetrator is condoned by the other woman on the grounds that "there is enough uncertainty in life without worrying which tree your husband is hanging from." Yellow Mary's recollection of losing her own child and of wet nursing for a white family traces another narrative of bereavement. But *Daughters of the Dust* is about how the Peazants resisted victimisation. They bear scars from the past – "but we wear scars like armour for protection." They are the children of "those who choose to survive."

Dash does not avoid examining the conflicting desires of those survivors. Viola and Yellow Mary, who both left for the mainland to escape their past, each have to deal with their own cultural legacy. Primly garbed in her navy serge suit and hat, the Baptist Viola zealously sets out to educate and convert her family. In contrast, Yellow Mary, a 'new woman' who has found financial independence in prostitution, arrives swathed in white dress and veil, emerging from the foamy sea like a goddess. Their sojourn on the island transforms them. Viola loosens up, embracing her past by kissing Nana's talisman and recognising her sexuality by kissing Mr Snead. Yellow Mary chooses to stay with Nana rather than make the planned voyage to Nova Scotia with her girlfriend Trula; the family home pulls her like the incoming tide. Indeed, *Daughters of the Dust* calls up the elemental rhythms of the wind and the sea and transports the audience to new shores.

Lizzie Francke

Dennis

USA 1993

Director: Nick Castle

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros

Executive Producer

Ernest Chambers

Producers

John Hughes

Richard Vane

Associate Producer

William Ryan

Unit Production Manager

Tony Brown

Location Manager

Jacelyn Baker

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Seth Vamos

2nd Unit Director

Freddie Hice

Casting

Jane Jenkins

Janet Hirshenson

Assistant Directors

Joe Camp III

Richard Oswald

Randall Newsome

James R.

Giovannetti Jnr

Jock Hockridge

Donna Shreve

Screenplay

John Hughes

Based on characters

created by

Hank Ketcham

Director of Photography

Thomas Ackerman

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Directors

of Photography

Steve Yaconelli

Reed Smoot

Flemming Olsen

Camera Operators

David Parrish

B:

James Blanford

Video Playback

Frankie Yario Jnr

Visual Effects

Pacific Data Images

Supervisor:

Rebecca Marie

Producer:

Daniel Chuba

Executive Producer:

John Swallow

Editor:

Kelly Tartan

Matte Paintings

Illusion Arts

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

Animation

Pacific Data Images

Barry Dempsey

Editor

Alan Heim

Production Designer

James Bissell

Art Directors

Michael Baugh

Steve Wolff

Set Design

Karen Fletcher

Set Decorator

Eve Cauley

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Michael Wood

Special Effects

Brian Wood

David Wood

Bill Kennedy

John Milinac

2nd Unit:

Dieter Sturm

Music/Music Director

Jerry Goldsmith

Orchestrations

Arthur Morton

Alexander Courage

Supervising Music Editor

Ken Hall

Music Editors

Darrell Hall

Scott Stambler

Songs

"Watcha Know Joe"

by James Oliver Young,

performed by

Jo Stafford;

"A String of Pearls"

by Jerry Gray,

performed by

Glenn Miller and

His Orchestra;

"Don't Hang Up"

by Kal Mann,

Dave Appell,

performed by

The Orlons

Costume Design

Ann Roth

Bridget Kelly

Costume Supervisor

Cheryl Beasley

Blackwell

Make-up

Linda Melazzo

Special Make-up

Kenny Myers

Title Design

Deborah Ross Film

Design

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors

Michael D. Wilhoit

Wylie Stateman

Sound Editors

Dan Rich

Chris Hogan

Christopher Assells

Supervising ADR Editor

Mark P. Stoelking

ADR Editors

Bill Voigtlander

Laura Graham

Supervising Foley Editor

Per Hallberg

Foley Editors

Frank T. Smathers

Jeff Rosen

Sound Recordists

Jim Alexander

Music:

Bruce Botnick

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Jeffrey J. Haboush

Rick Hart

Kevin E. Carpenter

Sound Effects Editor

Dino DiMuro

Randy Kelley

Kelly Oxford

Foley Artists

John Roesch

Alicia Stevenson

Stunts

Chad Randall

Danny Castle

Christopher Epper

Cris Thomas-Hice

Eurlyne Epper

Rick LeFevour

Kay Whipple

Mark Harper

Stacy Logan

Cast

Walter Matthau

Mr Wilson

Mason Gamble

Dennis Mitchell

Joan Plowright

Martha Wilson

Christopher Lloyd

Switchblade Sam

Lea Thompson

Alice Mitchell

Robert Stanton

Henry Mitchell

Amy Sakasitz

Margaret Wade

Kellen Hathaway

Joey

Paul Winfield

Chief of Police

Natasha Lyonne

Polly

Devin Ratray

Mickey

Hank Johnston

Gunther

Melinda Mullins

Andrea

Billie Bird

Edith Butterwell

Bill Erwin

Edward Little

Arnold Stang

Photographer

Ben Stein

Boss

Ethel Gerstein

Rebecca C. Hogan

Leona Toppel

Peggy Goldberg

Gaggle Ladies

Jack McGuigan

Gaggle Man

Corey Vane

Mike

Casey Gamble

Hide and Seeker

Daiana Campeanu

Babysitter

Robert A. Saunders

Broken Arm Babysitter

Beverly J. O'Donnell

Elderly Babysitter

Betty

Ruff

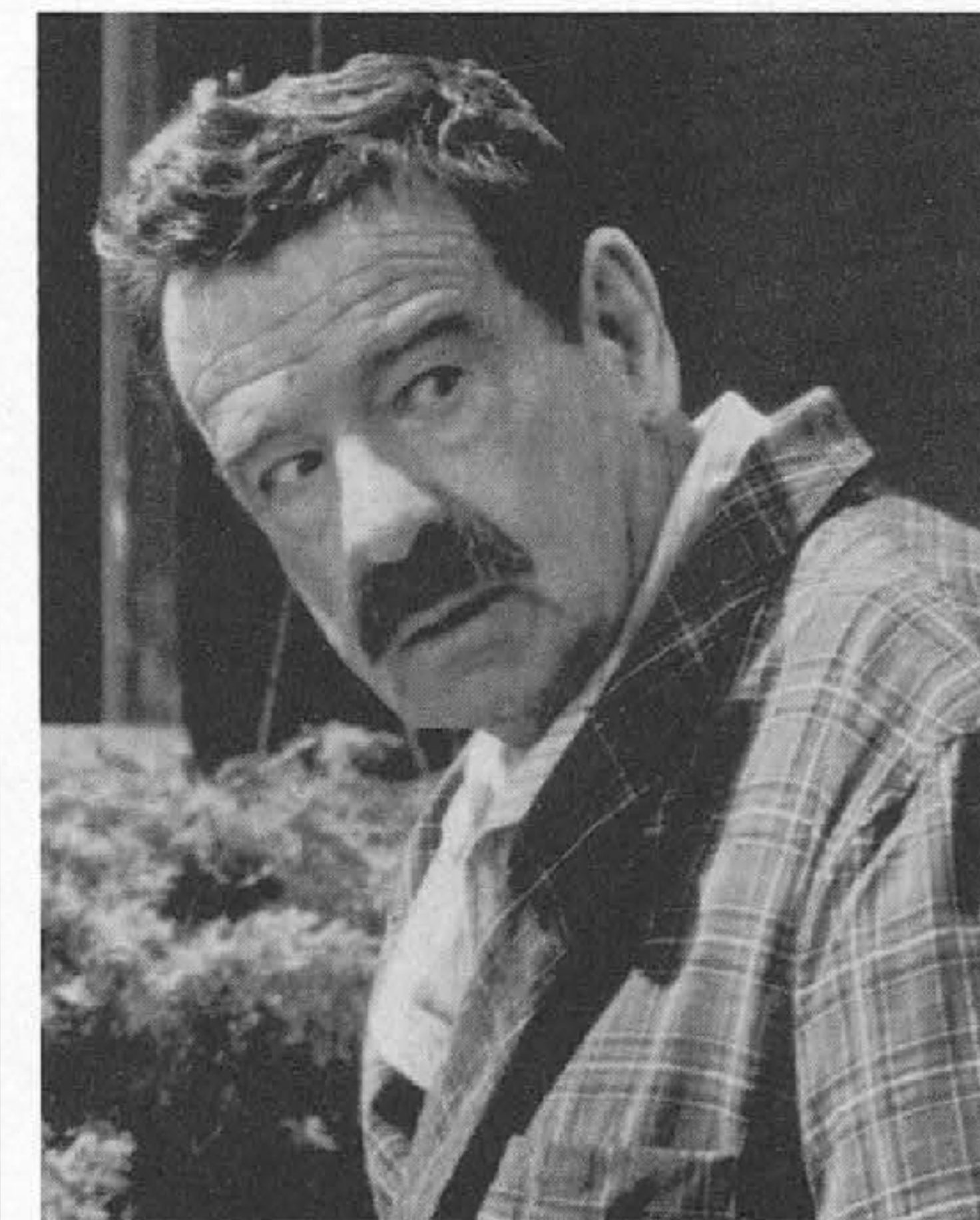
8,633 feet

96 minutes

● Dennis Mitchell, a six-year-old problem child, lives with his parents Alice and Henry next door to curmudgeonly Mr Wilson and his kindly wife Martha. Alice has had to take a job to help with family finances, so Dennis spends time with his friends Margaret and Joey in their treehouse, and later stays with the Wilsons while his parents are away.

Meanwhile, the nefarious Switchblade Sam has begun a spree of thieving in the town. One night he breaks into the Wilson house and steals a coin collection. Dennis raises the alarm just as Mr Wilson's 40-year orchid blooms, spoiling the flower's ten-second moment of glory, which his gardening club has gathered to watch. Furious, Mr Wilson banishes Dennis from his sight. Wandering in the woods, Dennis is taken hostage by Switchblade Sam, and in his innocently motivated desire to help ends up subjecting Sam to a series of painful ordeals. Upon discovering the stolen coins, Dennis escapes, turns Sam over to the police, and is reunited with his parents and a contrite Mr Wilson.

● Dennis is distilled from Hank Ketcham's American comic strip *Dennis the Menace*, an enduring Sunday newspaper serial whose version of suburban Americana provides a missing link between the adult-centered *Blondie*



Take your grandpa: Walter Matthau

of the 1940s and the all-child cast of the 60s *Peanuts*. Its main comic heat source is generational friction, fuelled with copious bouts of slapstick. In fact it's the same energy on which the *Home Alone* machines are run, which were also manufactured by Dennis' producer John Hughes. As with well-made video games, adults might decry the product's violence, sentimentality and addictiveness, but there's no denying the fact that Hughes makes some clever little gadgets.

Known as *Dennis the Menace* in the States, in Britain the film has been retitled simply *Dennis* in order to avoid trademark infringement with the D.C. Thompson character of the same name. It seems hardly likely that anyone could confuse *this* Dennis with the British proto-punk who launched a thousand New Age travellers' tatty black-and-red jumpers. Thompson's Dennis is an anarchist in almost every sense of the word, while the American's more anodyne mayhem is usually confined to nothing more scandalous than losing his frog among the pews during Sunday Service and accidentally maiming grown-ups. It's all clean, wholesome, unrelenting violence.

After a cartoon series that updated Dennis' milieu to the present day, complete with skateboards and video games, this latest film incarnation cheerfully recaptures the original quasi-50s setting. While cars and other props are contemporary, the costumes and sets are all Sputnik-era style, a self-consciously anachronistic melange of bouffant hair and pastel-coloured kitchens. Even the sexual politics are retro: Margaret, Dennis' tot friend, is obsessive about playing house, while Alice, his mother, is guilt-racked about neglecting her home, and colludes with Dennis to wreak retribution on the film's only real baddie, a childless career woman who plays a marginal role. Eventually, it becomes clear that this is a film designed for baby-sitting grandparents to take their progeny to – it's really their sense of nostalgia that is being appealed to, while only manageable younger children will feel seduced by a hero with only a slingshot for armour and not a single ninja kick to his repertoire.

The fast pace and pleasures of *Dennis* are not well served by its star Mason Gamble, who despite having been selected from a much-hyped nationwide talent search, is a rather colourless little sprite. All gloopy toilet-tissue ad eyes, he fails to convey what little pugnacity Ketcham's original character possessed. Inevitably he is beggared in any comparison with Hughes' other protégé, Macaulay Culkin. Still the film is forever redeemed by Walter Matthau's classic performance of cantanker, worth every penny of the admission price. His comic timing is exquisite as he runs through a gamut of grouchy gestures, horrified mugs, and mournful moues of resignation. Overall, there are worse ways for a kid to keep his or her grandparents occupied on a summer afternoon.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story

USA 1993

Director: Rob Cohen

Certificate
15

Distributor
UIP

Production Company
Universal

Executive Producer
Dan York

Producer
Raffaella De Laurentiis

Co-producer
Rick Nathanson

Associate Producers
Kelly Breidenbach
Hester Hargett

Hong Kong:
Charles Wang

Production Supervisors
US:

Robert H. Lemer

Hong Kong:

Allen Wan

Production Co-ordinators
US:

Cynthia Von Suhr

Hong Kong:

Venus Cheuk

Production Manager
Hong Kong:

Philip Lee

Unit Production Manager
Raffaella De Laurentiis

Location Managers
US:

Rhonda Baer

Hong Kong:

Amy Shuen

Post-production

Supervisor
David Pauker

Casting
Jane Jenkins

Janet Hirshenson

Assistant Directors
Herb Gains

Chitra F. Mojtabai

Hong Kong:

Patty C. Morrison

US:

Hester Hargett

Hong Kong:

Weigo Lee

Screenplay
Edward Khmara

John Raffo

Rob Cohen

Based on the book

Bruce Lee: The Man Only I Knew by Linda

Lee Cadwell

Director of Photography
David Eggby

Panavision

Colour
Deluxe

Additional Photography
Buzz Feitshans IV

Stanley Hung

Steadicam Operator
US:

Mark O'Kane

Visual Effects
VCE Inc:

Peter Kuran

Visual Effects Supervisor
Kevin O'Neill

Editor
Peter Amundson

Production Designer
Robert Ziembecki

Art Director
Ted Berner

Set Decorator
Dayna Lee

Set Dressers
US:

Cathy Mantych

Danny Butch

Hong Kong:

Gigi Choa

Ken Chiu

Storyboard Artist
Nikita Knatz

Special Effects

Co-ordinator
William H. Schirmer

Effects
US:

Floyd Van Wey

L. A. McConnell

Hong Kong:

John Chan

Kenneth Hsu

Demon Fabricator
Peter Bohanna

Music
Randy Edelman

Music Extracts
"Kung Fu" Main Title

"Theme" by James

Helms

Music Performed by
Demon Sounds:

Richard Moffett

Orchestrations
Greg McRitchie

Randy Edelman

Music Supervisor
Dawn Solér

Music Editor
Robert Randles

Songs
"Hong Kong Cha Cha"

by Rob Cohen, Robert

Randles, performed

by Lynn Ray, Xiao

Fen Min; "California

Dreaming" by John

Phillips, Michelle

Phillips, performed

by Shannon Lee;

"Green Onions" by

Al Jackson, Booker T.

Jones, Steve Cropper,

Lewis Steinberg,

performed by Marty

Blasick; "Er Hu Bye

Bye" by Robert Randles,

performed by Jiebing

Chen; "Party Lights"

by and performed

by Claudine Clark;

"The Man Who Shot

Liberty Valance" by

Burt Bacharach,

Hal David, performed

by Gene Pitney;

"Runaway" by Del

Shannon, Max Crook,

performed by Del

Shannon; "Drunken

Princess" performed

by Grace Zhan; "Cues

Big Boss (aka "Fists

of Fury") by Joseph

Koo; "Tightrope"

by and performed

by Leon Russell

Fight Choreography
John Cheung

Jeet Kune Do:
Jerry Poteet

Fran Joseph
Costume Design
Carol Ramsey

Associate:
Varcra Sandoria Russal

Hong Kong:
Jesse Dai

Wardrobe Supervisor
US:

Karyn Wagner

Make-up
Key:

James Ryder

Title Design
Dan Perri

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Sound Design
Leslie Shatz

Supervising Sound Editor
John Nutt

Sound Editors
Ernie Fosselius

Marjorie L. Hagar

James LeBrecht

Jeanne Putnam

Sound Recordists
US:

Reinhard Stergar

Hong Kong:

Steve Nelson

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Mark Berger

Leslie Shatz

Music:
Elton Ahi

Dennis Sands

Foley Artists
Margie O'Malley

Jennifer Myers

Marnie Moore

Technical Adviser
Jerry Poteet

Consultants
Linda Lee Cadwell

Robert Clouse

Stunt Co-ordinators
Merritt Yohnka

Steve Lambert

Stunts
Ching Wai Chung

John "Doc" D. Elliot

Dane Farwell

Peter Lai

Jeff Cadiente

Al Goto

Danny Wong

Colin Randall

Jeet Kune Do Trainer
Jerry Poteet

Film Extracts
Breakfast at Tiffany's

(1961)

Fist of Fury (1971)

Return of the Dragon

(1973)

Cast
Jason Scott Lee

Bruce Lee

Lauren Holly
Linda Lee

Robert Wagner
Bill Krieger

Michael Learned
Vivian Emery

Nancy Kwan
Gussie Yang

Kay Tong Lim
Philip Tan

Ric Young
Bruce's Father

Luoyong Wang
Yip Man

Sterling Macer
Jerome Sprout

Sven-Ole Thorsen
The Demon

John Cheung
Johnny Sun

Ong Soo Han
Luke Sun

Eric Bruskotter
Joe Henderson

10,783 feet

120 minutes

Aki Aleong
Principal Elder

Chao-Li Chi
Elder

Iain M. Parker
Brandon

Sam Hau
Young Bruce

Michelle Tennant
Shannon

Clyde Kusatsu
History Teacher

Alicia Tao
April

Kong Kwok Keung
Mr Ho

Johnny Cheung
Anthony Carpio

Chan Tat Kwong
Chefs

John Lacy
Nunnemacher

Harry Stanback
Benny Sayles

Michael Cudlitz
Tad Overton

Forry Smith
Green Hornet

Van Williams
Green Hornet Director

Sean Faro
Assistant Director

Alan Eugster
Propman

Paul Raci
Bad Guy

Ed Parker Jnr
Ed Parker

Shannon Lee
Party Singer

Robert D. Garrett
Krieger's Butler

Lala Sloatman
Sherry Schnell

Fu Suk Han
Cha Cha Dancer

Nick Brandon
Boswain

Louis Turenne
Maitre d'

Paul Mantee
Doctor

Jonathan Penner
Studio Executive

Calvin Bartlett
Stunt Co-ordinator

Jan Solomita
Shannon Uno

Hecklers
Lau Pak Lam

"Big Boss" Director
Rob Cohen

"Enter The Dragon"
Director

10,783 feet

120 minutes

There is a story of some pith and poignancy to be told about Bruce Lee, the former child actor who became an international martial arts star, and who died (of a swelling of the brain) in somewhat suspicious circumstances. It is a story that could offer insights into the more unsavoury aspects of the Hong Kong industry and the ambiguous realities of Chinese immigrant experience, as well as into contradictory aspects of Lee's own character. *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* opts instead to "print the legend".

***Dragon* is ostensibly based on the biography by Lee's American wife Linda – its title *Bruce Lee: The Man Only I Knew* offering itself as both a riposte to gossip about his affair with Hong Kong actress Ting Pei in whose flat his body was found, and as carrying a monopoly of the truth. But the film makes little of the tiny amount of fresh information that it contains (e.g., Lee's father dressed him as a girl in his early years to avoid detection by the demon who had snatched his elder brother).**

What the film does do is to make

fired. Before he leaves, Yang gives him a loan and advises him to invest it in education. Lee enrolls in college and becomes increasingly aware of racism. Hassled by a group of athletes in the college gym, he fights back, earning their respect, and agrees to teach them martial arts. His classes soon attract Linda and despite general disapproval of inter-racial relationships they start dating. Lee opens what he hopes will become the first in a chain of martial arts institutes.

Oakland, 1964. Lee's classes have become increasingly popular and attract the attention of the Chinese community who demand he stop teaching the non-Chinese. When he refuses, the community bosses arrange a tournament between him and the deadly Johnny Sun. Lee defeats him, but Sun strikes back after the match, crippling him. While he is in traction, Linda suggests he dictate to her his book on the new martial arts style he has evolved. At an international karate meeting at Long Beach, Lee's exposition of his style is booed. He issues an open challenge, and Johnny Sun responds. This time Lee defeats him, injuring him fatally. Lee is spotted and signed up to play Kato in the *Green Hornet* television series. He works on the idea for a new series, *Kung Fu*, but is not cast. Returning to Hong Kong for his father's funeral, Lee is signed up by 'Pearl of the Orient' studios.

1970, Thailand. Luke, Johnny Sun's brother, tracks Lee down and attacks him on set. Lee responds by killing him, and noticing the camera still running, exposes the film. *The Big Boss* makes Lee a star but his family life is neglected. He is offered the starring role in a Warner Brothers-Hong Kong co-production, *Enter the Dragon*, but during shooting he suffers another hallucination, in which the demon warrior threatens his son Jason. He fights and finally kills him. Three weeks before the film opens, he dies.

There is a story of some pith and poignancy to be told about Bruce Lee, the former child actor who became an international martial arts star, and who died (of a swelling of the brain) in somewhat suspicious circumstances. It is a story that could offer insights into the more unsavoury aspects of the Hong Kong industry and the ambiguous realities of Chinese immigrant experience, as well as into contradictory aspects of Lee's own character. *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* opts instead to "print the legend".

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What the film does do is to make

◀ a martial arts movie of Lee's own life, tailoring the genre to current fashions for ethnocentrism – Lee asserts his desire to become a Chinese hero with a Chinese culture and new age metaphysics. In making a theme of the bigotry Lee confronted, it feeds back to source a subject Lee himself explored in *Fist of Fury*, in which he memorably kicked to pieces a sign reading "No Dogs or Chinese". Much of this is par for the generic course. Some is kitsch: Linda, changing for a date with Lee, shocks her friend by telling her she would "go all the way" with a non-white. But some is pointed: the couple's initial enthusiasm for *Breakfast at Tiffany's* dies on appearance of the film's Oriental caricature, and we wince at the *Green Hornet* producer's instructions that Lee should not remove his mask lest his Oriental appearance become visible.

The film also ducks the opportunity to tell us much about Jeet Kune Do, the martial arts style Lee adapted from Wing Chun. Cohen's choice of genre cannot help seriously constraining any genuine biographical impulse. Conflicts have to be played out as tournaments, whether with bigoted whites or conservative Chinese. Lee's own angst has to be played out as his recurring fantasy of the Chinese warrior, a hallucinatory figure appearing at times of stress, caused on one occasion by a college assignment on Hegel. The demon warrior metaphor removes the need to deal either with the contentious issues of Triad involvement or with psychological problems. Thus Rob Cohen, the director of this film, playing Robert Clouse the director of *Enter the Dragon*, keeps the viewer firmly within the parameters of Lee's own fantasy. "Lost touch with you for a while there, buddy," is his only comment, as Lee emerges aghast from the final life-and-death struggle with his phantom adversary. On what Clouse saw, and others knew, Cohen remains tantalizingly silent.

Much of *Dragon* is predictable, awkwardly written and scant advance on the clutch of 70s film biographies which traded fairly shamelessly on Lee's name and notoriety. The lacunae are many and varied: Lee's experience as a Cantonese child star is not mentioned; *Fist of Fury*, *The Way of the Dragon* and the unfinished *Game of Death* are barely or not at all mentioned. There is no attempt to account for the crassness of *Enter the Dragon*, made when Lee was visibly unwell, and which misunderstood both the nature of the martial arts film and the particular contribution Lee made to it.

Apart from the shock of Jason Scott Lee's (no relation) boss-eyed appearance as the protagonist, the actor yields an account of his role which dispenses with any need for comparison. He is aided in the hyperbolic fight sequences by John Cheung, a stunt man who worked on *Enter the Dragon*. More poignancy than the project deserves is lent it by the recent death of Lee's son Brandon.

Verina Glaessner

A Far Off Place

USA 1993

Director: Mikael Salomon

Certificate PG
Distributor Buena Vista
Production Company Walt Disney Company
In association with
Amblin Entertainment
Executive Producers Kathleen Kennedy
Frank Marshall
Gerald R. Molen
Producers Eva Monley
Elaine Sperber
Co-producer William W. Wilson III
Production Co-ordinator Hilde Odelga
Unit Production Manager Rory Kilalea
Location Managers Mick Snell
Titus Chitokodo
Hilton Bales-Smith
Jaco Espach
Kevin Greetham
Post-production Supervisor Martin Cohen
Casting LA: Shari Rhodes
Sally Stiner
RSA: Christa Schamberger
Zimbabwe: Paul Tingay
ADR Voice: Mickie McGowan
Assistant Directors Michael Zimbrich
Nicholas M. Laws
Chris Brock
Jennifer Allen
Simon Shumba
Screenplay Robert Caswell
Jonathan Hensleigh
Sally Robinson
Based on the books
A Story Like the Wind,
A Far Off Place by
Laurens van der Post
Director of Photography Juan Ruiz-Anchia
Colour Rank Film
prints by:
Technicolor
2nd Unit Directors of Photography Mark Konnickx
Peter Robinson
Camera Operators Ian Fox
Special Visual Effects:
Wade Childress
Steadicam Operator David Luckenbach
Video Playback Richard Patton
Special Visual Effects Supervisors: Craig Baron
Michael Pangrazio
Executive-in-charge of
Production: Krystyna Demkowicz
Matte Artists Bill Mather
Brian Flora
Editor Ray Lovejoy
Production Designer Gemma Jackson
Art Directors Carine Tredgold
Jonathan McKinstry
Set Decorator Ian White
Special Effects Co-ordinator Dave Harris
Models Heather Cameron
Richard Olds

Music James Horner
Orchestrations Steve Bramson
Brad Dechter
Tom Pasatieri
Joel Rosenbaum
Supervising Music Editor Jim Henrikson
Music Editor Thomas Drescher
Songs "Zeppomania" by and performed by Wesley Plass; "C.O.D." by and performed by Donald Seigal, George Gatt; "Hitting Hard" by and performed by Mac Prindy
Costume Design Rosemary Burrows
Costume Supervisor Jayne Forbes
Make-up Artists Norma Hill
Mara Cedergren
Simon McQueen
Titles Pacific Title
Supervising Sound Editors Larry Kemp
Michael D. Wilhoit
Sound Editors Richard Dwan Jnr
Christopher Assells
Dan Hegeman
Marshall Winn
ADR Editor Avram Gold
Foley Editors Kelly Oxford
Dino DiMuro
Per Hallberg
Jay Richardson
Sound Recordists Colin Charles
African Field: Les Gilbert
Music: Shawn Murphy
Andy Bass
ADR Recordist Dean Drabin
Foley Recordist David Gertz
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists Terry Porter
Mel Metcalfe
David J. Hudson
Sound Effects Editors Frank Smathers
Mark Lanza
Randy Kelley
Foley Artists James Moriana
Jeffrey Wilhoit
Bushman Adviser Friederich Reinhard
Stunt Co-ordinator Roly Jansen
Stunts Phillip Notununu
Ernest Mbanze
Graham Press
Peter Spyropoulos
Neville Strydom
Gavin Mey
Craig Ginsberg
Ian Harvey
Stunt Doubles Reese Witherspoon:
Fiona Nuthall
Tania Cavanagh
Ethan Randall:
Michele Mathison
Günther Nietner
Sarel Bok:
Gray Andrew
Lucius Mathazia
Aerial Co-ordinator Kevin Grinaker
Action Vehicle/Arms Co-ordinator Lance David
Westerhout

Armourer Clint Richter
Animal Co-ordinator Ann Olivecrona
Animal Trainers Karl Miller
Teresa Miller
Servas Murray

Cast
Reese Witherspoon
Nonnie Parker
Ethan Randall
Harry Winslow
Jack Thompson
John Ricketts
Sarel Bok
Xhabbo
Robert Burke
Paul Parker
Patricia Kalember
Elizabeth Parker
Daniel Gerroll
John Winslow
Maximilian Schell
Colonel Mopani
Theron
Miles Anderson
Jardin
Fidelis Cheza
Tracker
Taffy Chihota
Warden Robert

Anthony Chinyanga
Doctor
Brian Cooper
Store Keeper
Magdalene Damas
Nuin-Tara
John Indi
Bamuthi
Sebastian Klein
Kessia Randall
Children on Sand Dune
Isaac Mabikwa
Poacher
Bertha Msora
Koba
Japan Mthembu
Carfax
Charles Pillai
Mr Tang
Andrew Whaley
Warden Gerald
King George Ziki
Moyo Group
Matabele Dancers

10,472 feet
116 minutes

Present-day Botswana. Paul Parker is blasting a drainage ditch for his home when his old friend John Winslow arrives from New York, with his son Harry reluctantly in tow. After almost blundering into one of the explosions, Harry mooches around feeling out of place. That night he follows Paul's teenage daughter Nonnie to a secret meeting with Xhabbo, a young bushman. Xhabbo insists that they both remain with him overnight; he has had a premonition. At daybreak Nonnie sees smoke coming from her house and rushes back to find that ivory poachers – against whom her father had been campaigning – have laid waste to everything and everyone. She and her companions set off on the run across the Kalahari desert.

Family friend Mopani Theron, head of the anti-poaching squad, vows to find the culprits. A colleague, John Ricketts, offers to search for the children by helicopter. Meanwhile the fleeing Xhabbo 'asks' a herd of elephants to follow in their wake and obscure their tracks. A helicopter appears but Nonnie insists they hide. They lay out their clothes as decoys, and the helicopter shoots at the inert forms – their would-be assassin is John Ricketts. Now dead in the eyes of their enemies, the fugitives continue across the desert. They learn from one another, and though reluctant to show it, Nonnie begins to care about Harry, who in turn becomes respectful of Bushman culture. Ricketts learns of the teenagers' continued existence through a bracelet dropped by Nonnie. Stung by a scorpion, Xhabbo again has a premonition, and despite his delirium is able to summon up the wind to cause a sand storm, which forces their pursuers away. The sea lies just over the next dune; the children are found and saved.

Mopani, Nonnie and Harry find the ivory hoard in one of Ricketts' mines; he turns up and there is an armed struggle, and Ricketts is killed in an explosion. Bidding goodbye to Xhabbo

and Harry, Nonnie returns to her homestead. Harry arrives carrying a cage of birds, the one thing on their journey that Nonnie had admitted to missing.

● Last year, John G. Avildsen's *The Power of One* showed just how awry teen pics set in Southern Africa could go, so a Disney/Amblin co-production set in the same locale could be grounds for righteous indignation. The combination of great natural beauty and overt injustice have a storybook straightforwardness to them; unfortunately *The Power of One* wanted a storybook hero too, a nice white boy hero to lead the humble indigenous folk. Fortunately, *A Far Off Place* is as far removed from this ethos as you could reasonably expect; adapted from two Laurens van der Post novels, this story of good teens chased by bad adults has an old-fashioned Disney ring pumped up with Spielbergian liberalism. With the lead teen recast as female and the story transposed to the present day, the script has every opportunity to be contemporary in its ruminations. Post's mercenaries are rewritten as poachers), but manages to avoid any socio-political conflicts, as the young heroes mostly spend their time together in the wilderness, outside any social structures.

In Harry's description of twentieth-century technology (satellite TV and Walkman culture) and in Ricketts' commercial practice (the coveted tusks graphically lopped off with chainsaws), Western culture signifies excess and rupture; it uses dynamite to dig drainage ditches and routs opponents by massacre. It's nature, then, and not just the Kalahari itself, that is the 'far-off place' of the title. At the same time the film is an account of an adult world in which Harry and Nonnie still occupy only marginal positions. They occupy a position somewhere between this world and Nature. Nature prevails, though, and in its quasi-mystical manifestations undermines the presumptions of the adult world. As the film moves towards closure – the children's parents dead and Ricketts accordingly punished – Harry's decision to stay represents a prodigal-son return to a pre-electric world.

In its downplaying of technology and its leisurely pacing, lack of heroics and nominal episodes of tension, *A Far Off Place* seems boldly old-fashioned, almost a travelogue dressed up in dramatic form. Spectacle of never-ending red sands is intercut with the teenagers' exchanges, and a brief interlude in a crocodile-infested swamp followed by a near-fatal leap across a crevasse, a scene apparently tacked on to spice things up. It's unnecessary, though, because on top of Juan Ruiz-Anchia's dizzying photography (of the Namib desert, standing in for the Kalahari), Nonnie, Harry and Xhabbo make engaging characters, strongly played and equipped with some well-scripted banter. In all that it sets out to do, this is an affectionate and accomplished film.

Paul Tarrago

Hot Shots! Part Deux

USA 1993

Director: Jim Abrahams

Certificate

12
Distributor
20th Century Fox
Production Company
20th Century Fox
Executive Producer
Pat Proft
Producer
Bill Badalato
Associate Producers
Greg Norberg
Michael McManus
Production Supervisor
Barbara A. Hall
Unit Production/
Aerial/Marine Manager
Bill Badalato
Location Manager
Bruce Lawhead
2nd Unit Director
Ernie Orsatti
Casting
Jackie Burch
Assistant Directors
Denis L. Stewart
Matthew Rowland
Bryan Dresden
Screenplay
Jim Abrahams
Pat Proft
Director of Photography
John R. Leonetti
Colour
DeLuxe
2nd Unit Director
of Photography
Gary Kibbe
Miniature Visual Effects
Photography
Michael O. Sajbel
Director of Matte
Photography
Craig Barron
Camera Operator
Robert LaBonge
Visual Effects Supervisor
Erik Henry
Special Visual Effects
Producer
Matte World
Executive in charge
of Production:
Krystyna Demkowicz
Miniature Visual Effects
Sessums Engineering
Director:
Michael O. Sajbel
Unit Producer/
Production Manager:
Gary R. Maxwell
Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Digital:
Metrolight Studios
Barry Watkins
John "Bear" Bryant
Optical Composites/
Bluescreen
Jeff Matakovich
Matte Artist Supervisor
Michael Pangrazio
Animation/Rotoscope
Leigh Rahl
Jackie Ruchman
Lorraine Cardinal
Editor
Malcolm Campbell
Production Designer
William A. Elliott
Art Director
Greg Papalia
Set Design
James F. Clayton Snr
Set Decorator
Jerie Kelter
Set Dressers
Glenn "Spanky" Roberts
Mike Holowach
Michael Vojvoda
Doug Sieck
Roger Abell
Kai Blomberg
Alan Baptiste Jnr

Storyboard Illustrator

Dan Sweetman
Special Effects Supervisor
David Simmons
Special Effects Co-ordinator
John Frazier
Mercury Effects
Effect Innovations
Production Supervisor:
Karl Roth
Digital Presidential Effect
VIFX
Richard Hollander
Peter Crossman
Mechanical Effects
A.n.a.t.o.m.o.r.p.h.e.x
James Clark
Robert Devine
Head Model Maker
Jack Sessums
Model Makers
Gary Tracer
Dave Humpert
Music
Basil Poledouris
Orchestrations
Greig McRitchie
Music Editor
Curtis Roush
Songs
"Innamorata" by Harry
Warren, Jack Brooks;
"Father Knows Best
Theme" by Irving
Friedman, Don Ferris;
"Theme from Sea Hunt"
by Ray Llewelyn; "Hall
or Nothing" by Arsenio
Hall; "I'm So Excited"
by Anita Pointer, June
Pointer, Ruth Pointer,
Trevor Lawrence,
performed by
The Pointer Sisters;
"American Gladiators
Theme" by Bill Conti
Choreography
Lester Wilson
Raker Girls:
Carol Tong
Costume Design
Mary Malin
Costume Supervisors
Mark A. Peterson
Eileen Mae Sieff
Make-up
Designer:
Ronnie Specter
Artist:
John Blake
Charlie Sheen:
David Anderson
Special Make-up Effects
The David L. Anderson
Studio
Title Design
Phill Norman
Titles
Pacific Title
Sound Design
Harry E. Snodgrass
Supervising Sound Editors
Gary S. Gerlich
Gregory M. Gerlich
Sound Editors
Richard LeGrand Jnr
William Jacobs
Bruce Lacey
Marshall Winn
Supervising ADR Editor
Petra Bach
ADR Editors
Andrea Horta
Zack Davis
Robert C. Heffernan
Foley Editors
David L. Horton Jnr
Scot Tinsley

Sound Recordists

Thomas Causey
Mark "Frito" Long
Music:
Tim Boyle
ADR Recordists
Charleen Richards
Dean Drabin
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Steve Maslow
Gregg Landaker
Sound Effects
Visiontrax Inc.
SEAL Technical Adviser
Thomas S. Nelson
Stunt Co-ordinator
Ernie Orsatti
Stunts
T.C. Badalato
Patrick Banta
Richard L. Blackwell
Bobby Brown
Keith Campbell
Danny Castle
Phil Chong
Alex Daniels
Mark DeAlessandro
Kenny Endoso
Andrew Gill
Al Goto
Brian Imada
Jeff Imada
Terry Jackson
Donna Keegan
Henry Kingi
Barbara Klein
Randy Lamb
Al Leong
Eddie Mathews
Lisa McCullough
Cliff McLaughlin
Greg Michaels
Alan Oliney
Noon Orsatti
Jimmy Ortega
Tricia Peters
Steve Picerni
Denney Pierce
Philip Tan
Randy Toyota
George P. Wilbur
Eddie Yansick
Parachute Jumpers:
Jeff Habbestad
Jefferey Jones
Moe Viletto
B.J. Worth
Stunt Double
Charlie Sheen:
Eddie Braun
Swordmaster
Dan Speaker
Aerial Co-ordinator
Allen Gerbino
Marine Co-ordinator
Ransom Walrod
Pilots
Allen Gerbino
Thais Kathryn
Connolly
Skip Evans
Art Gotisar
Alan D. Purwin
Chuck Tamburro
Michael Tamburro
Mark A. Thomson
Film Extracts
Rapid Fire (1992)
Home Alone 2 (1992)

Cast

Topper Harley
Lloyd Bridges
Tug Benson
Valeria Golino
Ramada Rodham
Hayman
Richard Crenna
Colonel Denton
Walters
Brenda Bakke
Michelle Rodham
Huddleston
Miguel Ferrer
Harbinger
Rowan Atkinson
Dexter Hayman
Jerry Haleva
Saddam Hussein
David Wohl
Gerou
Mitchell Ryan
Gray Edwards
Michael Colyar
Williams
Ryan Stiles
Rabinowitz
Rosemary Johnston
Lavinia Rodham
Benson
Gregory Sierra
Captain
Andreas Katsulas
Rufshaad
Clyde Kusatsu
Prime Minister Soto
Ben Lemon
Team 2 Leader
Buck McDancer
Richard Nixon
Larry Lindsey
Gerald Ford
Ed Beheler
Jimmy Carter
Daniel T. Healy
George Bush
Jay Koch
Ronald Reagan
Charlie Haugk
Navy Seal
Dian Kobayashi
Mrs Rodham Soto
Bob Vila
Bob Vila
Stuart Proud Eagle Grant
Geronimo
J.D. DeKranis
Michael Corleone Look-
alike
Bob Legionaire
Captain McCluskey
Look-alike
Corey Rand
Sollozzo Look-alike
Tony Edwards
Limo Driver
James Lew
Kickboxer Opponent
Gerald Okamura
Corrupt Kickboxing
Referee
Chi-Muoi Lo
Thai Kickboxing
Sportscaster
Ron Pitts
Black Kickboxing
Sportscaster
Norm Compton
Phil
Kelly Connell
Radio Operator
Wayne Satz
News Anchorman
Pat Harvey
News Reporter
Joseph V. Perry
Singing Waiter
Oz Tortora
Singing Busboy
Judith Kahan
Veiled Woman
Shaun Toub
Sleeping Guard
Mark Steen
Adrian Messenger
Carey Tall Snr
Train Conductor
Don Miloyevich
Cab Driver
Edward Nassaney
Iraqi Door Guard
Andy Siegel
Iraqi Soldier
C. Ransom Walrod
Iraqi Boat Driver

John Arthur Escobar
Necktie Guard
Scott Reeves
Christopher Lindsay
Daniel Herold
Thomas Temple
Lindsay Kough
Dennis Barglof
Michal Templeton
Andrew Link
Keith Woulard
Dan Jessee
Chris Sweeney
Timothy Henkel
Navy Seals
Melanie Asistores
Tiaraya Soo
Haeran Park
Carol Tong
Susan Salgado
Raker Girls
Nancy Abrahams
Snatched Baby's
Mother
Charlie Abrahams
Snatched Baby
Jane Butenhoff
Slim Woman at
Banquet

Louise Yaffe
Eleanor Schiff
Gray Edwards'
Concubines
Pamela Thompson
Karen "Boom Boom" Proft
Nancy Steen
Nuns Not in This Movie
Don Gruenberg
Alice Gruenberg
Jamie Abrahams
Backyard Family
Joseph "Bambi" Abrahams
Basketball Player
Alison Anne Abrahams
Chain Skimmer
Jack Bernstein
Cop
Deborah Hwang-Marriott
Kickboxing Mother
William Haig Marriott
Kickboxing Child
Siren
Zap
American Gladiators

7,879 feet
88 minutes

A special forces mission to free US hostages from the en suite prison camp of a mad Middle Eastern dictator's palace is ambushed, panicking the dictator into accidents with machine guns, domestic appliances and finger food. Back in the US, demented President Tug Benson orders a mission to rescue the mission to rescue the mission. His top advisor Colonel Denton Walters suggests Topper Harley, "the best of what's left."

In a Far Eastern gambling shack, Harley has a kick-boxing bout with an oriental, closely watched by Walters and a team of cheerleaders. The Colonel and CIA mission head Michelle Huddleston follow him to him to help. He recalls his desertion by the love of his life, Ramada, which drove him into the monastic life. Meanwhile the sex-forsworn monks queue to impress Michelle.

At a Presidential dinner, Michelle's knee-crossing brings steam to Harley's ears; in a limousine afterwards, their activities are lovingly videoed by the chauffeur. The following day, having joined a marine unit, Topper is sent to the Middle East where they are met by the local guerilla contact, who turns out to be Ramada. As they sail under



Musclebound and gagged: Golino, Sheen

disguise in a fishing vessel towards their target, Ramada explains that she left Harley because she was married, and that her husband Dexter Hayman is now a prisoner of the dictator. After destroying a gunboat, the team arrive at the camp and storm it. Meanwhile, President Benson himself swims ashore in a wet suit and proceeds to duel with the madman. Harley rescues Dexter, and nobly defers to him with Ramada. However, Dexter steps off a cliff and once Michelle is discovered to be a spy who betrayed the former missions, Topper and Ramada are re-united.

If, as much reported, Hollywood is currently in a sweat of self-loathing about the quality of its product, then what better barometer of contempt than a Jim Abrahams spoof? *Hot Shots!* was neither particularly venomous towards its model *Top Gun*, nor all that irreverent once it had underlined the lame ideas and stock situations; but it did give some sense of the cynicism behind the gung-ho military blockbusters of the 80s. That Hollywood now feels inclined to disavow the violence that characterised so many Reagan era movies makes this a convenient moment for Abrahams to pump chisel-jawed hero Topper Harley up to Rambo proportions. If the result feels as much an act of bad faith as the Stallone originals, then that's just another layer of symptomatic irony to compound the guilt that studio executives apparently feel about indulging the more visceral pleasures of adolescent boys.

The anxiety which has led to Schwarzenegger's fiscally floppy bout of self-analysis *Last Action Hero* (in which Arnie's 'loose cannon' cop is much like Emilio Estevez's in *National Lampoon's Loaded Weapon 1*) is evidenced here in the speed and disdain with which film source references are disposed of, sometimes much faster than the actual gags. There's also a strong whiff of nostalgia about some of the sources chosen: the spaghetti-eating scene from *The Lady and the Tramp*, the airstrip conclusion to *Casablanca* (already spoofed famously by Woody Allen in *Play It Again Sam*). Of course it's in the nature of a spoof to flaunt its neuroses, but *Hot Shots! Part Deux* shows surprisingly scant interest in its *Rambo* model. All our amazement is concentrated onto whether Charlie Sheen's new-found bulk is fake or not.

In the era of morphing and animatronics the question may be irrelevant. He looked totally convincing but I'd rather believe that Sheen's miraculously sculpted sinew is fake than accept that he would muscle-bind for a mere spoof. Yet, straight original movies have begun to incorporate elements of self-parody (Nora Ephron's *Sleepless in Seattle*, for example) and some blockbuster concepts are already too spoof-like to bear spoofing (*Super Mario Bros.*). In that context, maybe *Hot Shots! Part Deux* is as close as Sheen can get to *Raging Bull*.

Nick James

In the Line of Fire

USA 1993

Director: Wolfgang Petersen

Certificate
Not yet issued

Distributor
Columbia TriStar

Production Company
Columbia Pictures

Executive Producers
Wolfgang Petersen
Gail Katz
David Valdes

Producer
Jeff Apple

Co-producer
Bob Rosenthal

Production Supervisor
Campaign Unit:
Danis Regal

Production Co-ordinators
Karen Penhale
Washington:
Cynthia Streit

Unit Production Manager
David Lester

Location Managers
Kokayi Ampah
Washington:
Michael Wallace

Casting
Janet Hirshenson
Jane Jenkins
Associate:
Michael Hirshenson

Assistant Directors
Peter Kohn
Lee Cleary
David Katz
Campaign Unit:
Michael Grillo

Screenplay
Jeff Maguire

Director of Photography
John Bailey
Panavision
Campaign Unit:
Mark Vargo

Colour
Technicolor

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Mark Vargo

Camera Operators
Michael Stone
B Camera:
Mitchell Amundsen
2nd Unit:
Harry Garvin
Campaign Unit:
Don Reddy
Gabor Kover

Visual Effects
Sony Pictures
Imagesworks
Supervisor:
John Nelson
Producer:
George Merkert
Lead Animator/
Software:
Mark Lasoff
Senior Animator/
Software:
Bill Schultz
Senior Animator:
Jerome Chen
Animators:
Mark Sorell
Scott Kilburn
Ron Brinkmann
David Douglas
R/Greenberg Associates:
Producers:
Robert M. Greenberg
Nancy Bernstein
Digital Video Editors:
Paul Agid
Burtis Scott
Digital Film
Supervisor:
Chip Houghton

Additional Optical and Digital Composite
Jeff Matakovich

Digital Film Services
Cinesite:
Visual Effects
Supervisor:
Bruno George

Digital Co-ordinator:
Michele C. Vallillo

Composite Designers:
Brad Kuehp
Ken Brain

Visual Effects Supervisor
2nd Unit:
Mark Vargo

Editors
Anne V. Coates
Additional:
Steven Kemper

Production Designer
Lilly Kilvert

Art Director
John Warnke

Set Design
Jann K. Engel

Set Decorators
Kara Lindstorm
Washington:
A. Charles Carnaggio

Storyboard Artist
Carl Aldana

Special Effects
Rocky Gehr

Music
Ennio Morricone

Orchestrations
Ennio Morricone

Music Editor
Bill Abbott

Songs
"Willow Weep For Me" by Anne Ronell;
"All Blues" by and performed by Miles Davis; "As Time Goes By" by Herman Hupfeld; "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" by Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart; "I Only Have Eyes For You" by Harry Warren, Al Dubin

Costume Design
Erica Edell Phillips

Costume Supervisor
Amy Stofsky

Make-up Artists
Jim McCoy
Werner Keppler
Washington:
Barbara Lacy

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors
Wylie Stateman

Dialogue Editors
Gregg Baxter

ADR Editors
Constance A. Kazmer
Laura Graham
Bill Voigtlander

Foley Supervisor
Larry Kemp

Foley Editor
Peter Michael Sullivan

Sound Recordists
Willie Burton

Music
Franco Patrignani
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Kevin O'Connell
Rick Kline

Sound Effects Supervisor
Scott Gerstin

Sound Effects Editors
Randy Kelley
Frank Smathers
Jay B. Richardson
Dino Dimuro

Foley Artists
Dan O'Connell
Gary Hecker

Technical Adviser
Robert Snow

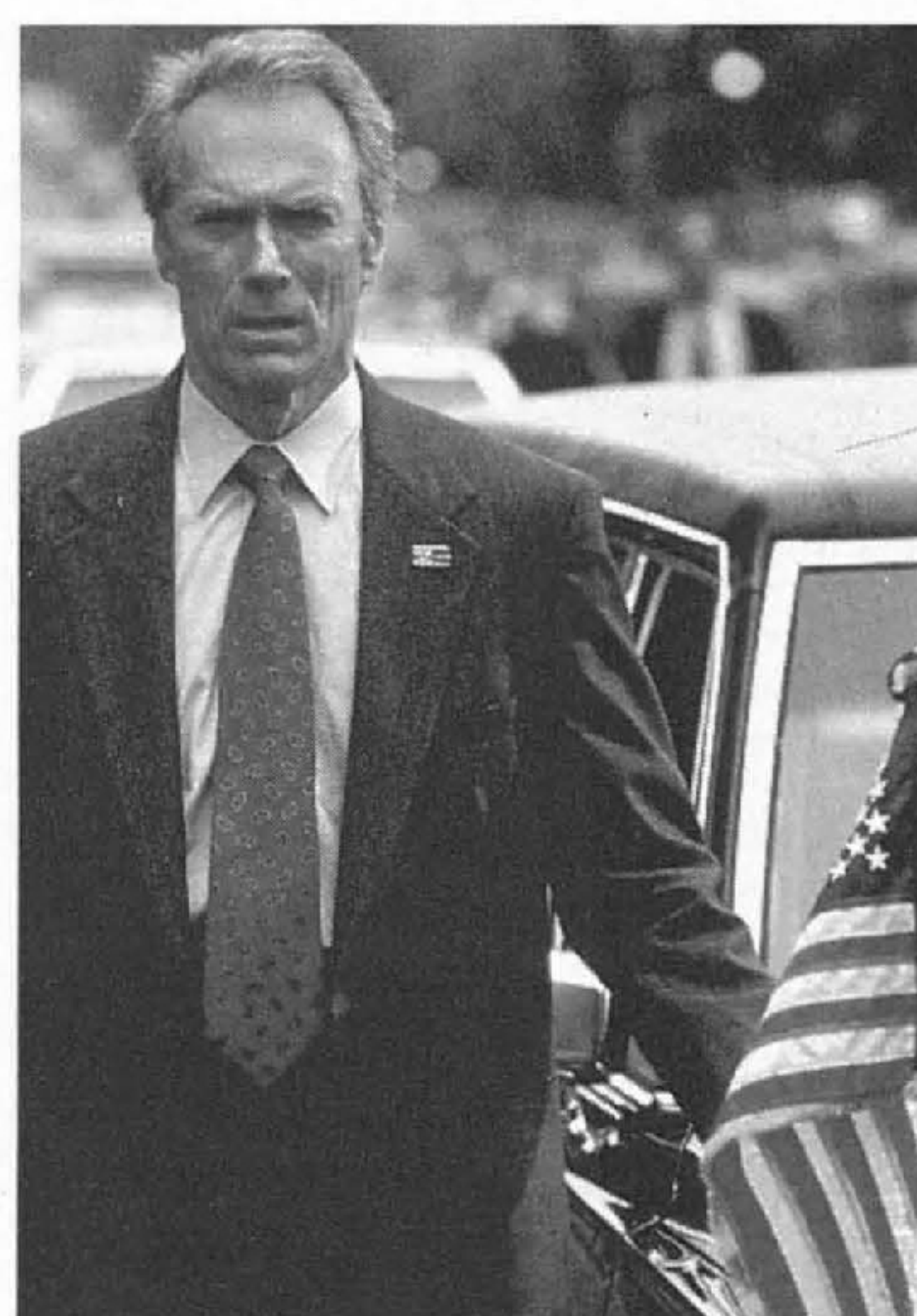
Stunt Co-ordinator
Buddy Van Horn

Stunts
Mike Adams
Dan Barringer
Mike Watson
Larry Holt
Jack Gill
Joe Stone
Neezer Tarleton
Christine A. Baur
Loron James
William James Madden
Sharon Schaffer
Denise Lynne Roberts
Ken Bates
Gary Jensen
John Robotham
John Alden
Orwin Harvey
Spike Silver
Steve Geray
Buck Dallas McDance
Webster Whinery
Terry Jackson
Bill McIntosh
Alex Sharp
Roydon Elwood Clark
Andy Gill
Nick Brett

Cast
Clint Eastwood
Frank Horrigan
John Malkovich
Mitch Leary
Rene Russo
Lilly Raines
Dylan McDermott
Al D'Andrea
Gary Cole
Bill Watts
Fred Dalton Thompson
Harry Sargent
John Mahoney
Sam Campagna
Greg Alan-Williams
Matt Wilder
Jim Curley
President
Sally Hughes
First Lady
Clyde Kusatsu
Jack Okura
Steve Hyner
Tony Carducci
Tobin Bell
Mendoza
Bob Schott
Jimmy Hendrickson
Juan A. Riojas
Raul
Elsa Raven
Booth's Landlady
Arthur Senzy
Paramedic
Patrika Darbo
Pam Magnus

Mary Van Arsdel
Sally
Ryan Cutrona
LAPD Brass
Lawrence Lowe
FBI Technician
Brian Libby
FBI Supervisor
Eric Bruskotter
Young Agent
Patrick Caddell
Political Speaker
John Heard
Professor Riger
Alan Toy
Walter Wickland
Carl Ciarfallo
CIA Agent Collins
Walt MacPherson
Robert Peters
Hunters
Tyde Kierney
Police Captain Howard
Anthony Peck
FBI Official
Rick Hurst
Bartender
Doris E. McMillon
DC News Anchor
Robert Sandoval
Bellboy
Joshua Malina
Agent Chavez
William G. Schilling
Sanford Riggs
Michael Kirk
Computer Technician/Bates
Richard Camphuis
Party Fat Cat
Marlan Clarke
Marge
Robert Alan Beuth
Man at Bank
Susan Lee Hoffman
Woman at Bank
Donna Hamilton
Reporter at Dulles
Bob Jimenez
Reporter at Hotel
Cylik Cozart
Agent Cozart
Michael Zurich
Agent Zurich
Rich Didonato
Jeffrey Kurt Miller
Undercover Agents
Kirk Jordan
Agent

11,610 feet
129 minutes



Last action dinosaur: Clint Eastwood

Booth. Booth calls Horrigan again, taunting him about his inability to save JFK, and showing a detailed knowledge of Horrigan's life - his drink problem and the fact that his wife left.

Booth opens a bank account using a fictional company name and then, to cover his tracks, feels obliged to murder the bank clerk and her flatmate. Booth uses the account to make donations to the President's campaign fund, which later ensures an invitation to the presidential banquet in LA. During escort duty, Horrigan recognises a disguised Booth and gives chase. Booth escapes, but leaves his fingerprints behind; but his prints and identity are deemed to be classified information, and withheld from Horrigan.

At an indoor rally, Horrigan causes a scare when he mistakes a bursting balloon for a gunshot - Booth is responsible. A lead takes Horrigan and his partner Al D'Andrea to Booth's home in Phoenix, where two CIA agents reveal Booth's true identity - Mitch Leary, a top CIA assassin who was made redundant. Out practising with a homemade plastic gun, Leary is approached by two men and kills them both. Tracing Leary's latest call, Horrigan and D'Andrea pursue him over the rooftops; Horrigan almost falls and is caught by Leary, who gives him the option of killing them both. Saving Horrigan, Leary kills D'Andrea and escapes.

Posing as a businessman, Leary appears at the fund-raising junket in LA. Horrigan, arresting an innocent waiter in front of the TV cameras, is re-assigned to the next presidential destination, San Diego. There, he realises that a note found at Leary's house refers to the bank where Leary opened his account. Investigating, he returns to the banquet in time to put himself between Leary and the President. A struggle concludes with Leary dangling from a great height. Horrigan offers to save him, but Leary chooses to fall to his death. Hailed as a hero, Horrigan announces his retirement and returns home with Lilly to hear a final message from Leary, which they choose to ignore.

One of the watersheds of Clint Eastwood's movie career was his

role as the maverick detective Harry Callahan in Don Siegel's *Dirty Harry*. The crucial symbolic watershed in postwar US history was the assassination of John F Kennedy. The value of *In the Line of Fire* lies in the way it adroitly unites these two elements. The film functions both as a formidable star vehicle and as a sophisticated cultural sponge, soaked to capacity with enlightening allusions to other movies.

Even down to his similar-sounding name, Frank Horrigan is a close relative of Harry Callahan: he's a professional with his own personal code, short on words and long on actions, a social and moral dinosaur who's accurately distrustful of authority. Unlike Harry, though, he also has a strong streak of self-pity, which goes back to his guilt about his perceived role in the death of JFK.

Much of the emphasis in Siegel's direction lay on bringing out the similarities between Harry and his adversary, the serial killer Scorpio. Both define themselves through violence, both live isolated lives in a city depicted as a nightmarish wasteland. The authorities Harry work for are morally bankrupt: his own life is purposeless but for his job; and the film's conclusion sees him blasting Scorpio into oblivion, then throwing away his badge of office in disgust. *Dirty Harry* is a profoundly pessimistic film, graphically conjuring the loss of direction that was seen to pervade US life in the years following JFK's assassination.

A superb villain, Mitch Leary in *In the Line of Fire* is a direct descendant of both Scorpio and *Taxi Driver's* Travis Bickle. A disillusioned ex-CIA assassin, he's decided to take his revenge on the system that he feels has betrayed him. He's a man who's been morally destroyed by the time he's lived through and the discredited policies he's helped to implement. In his phone calls to Horrigan, Leary tries to persuade him that they share a common sense of betrayal. He wants Horrigan to acknowledge that society is now beyond redemption and that merely playing out a violent ritual is now all that's left to them both: "There is no cause worth fighting for. All we have is the game."

The world Leary talks about here is precisely the world of *Dirty Harry*, in which San Francisco became a gigantic game board for Harry and Scorpio to act out their struggle. The master stroke in *In the Line of Fire*, however, is the way in which it at first engages with the issue of Leary and Horrigan both being mentally scarred, but then deftly changes tack and organises itself around Horrigan's dismissal of the comparison. What Leary fails to understand is Horrigan's concept of honour - obviously, for a man who worked for the CIA in the 60s and 70s, that would be a difficult idea to grasp.

Horrigan is less the near-psychotic Callahan of the original *Dirty Harry* than a low self-esteeming version of the socially more relaxed hero of that film's first sequel, *Magnum Force* - a man who is prepared to work within 'the system' because it's all there is. In

every area except his professional code, where no compromise is allowed, Horrigan is a pragmatist, prepared to accept imperfection – in others, if not in himself. He sees JFK's assassin not in terms of conspiracies and cover-ups, but as a simple follow-on from his own lapse from his professional high standards. "If only I'd reacted," he tells Lilly, "I could have taken that shot." Nothing else is important; Lee Harvey Oswald and the 'magic bullet theory' don't even rate a mention – which surely must be a first in any movie to include real footage of the Kennedy motorcade.

It's a gloriously absurd idea, particularly coming in the wake of Oliver Stone's *JFK*, but it's also a concept perfectly in keeping with Eastwood's star image and the way in which this image was first established in the Western genre. Stone's film might be seen as the *High Noon* of Kennedy movies, with Kevin Costner's Jim Garrison as a Gary Cooper/Marshall Kane figure, vainly asking questions, pleading for support from, then pointing an accusing finger at the corrupt social and political order. In *the Line of Fire*, however, takes a Hawksian, *Rio Bravo* approach to the subject. Horrigan isn't concerned with anyone else's behaviour: almost all officials are fools, the world is full of bad guys, the CIA employs killers – all this goes without saying.

However, the crucial difference between Horrigan and Harry is that Harry lives by his heroic code, while Horrigan guiltily believes he's failed in his life by not saving JFK. Saving the President 30 years on redeems him in much the same way that Dude – the Dean Martin character in *Rio Bravo* – is rehabilitated by helping John Wayne's sheriff hold out against the bad guys. It's the code of the professional lawman that Horrigan reaffirms, but it's also the behaviour of a hero who neither expects nor requires perfection from the world around him. Unlike both *Dirty Harry* and *High Noon*'s Marshall Kane, Horrigan doesn't throw his badge away, but retires happily and gracefully. He is a much more mellow Eastwood hero than Callahan – not a cynical avenger, but someone who's content again with his place in the world. It's a cosily redemptive ending.

A film as full of remarkable and rewarding resonances as *Unforgiven*, *In the Line of Fire* shows that the continuing potency of Eastwood's star image lies in his ability to redefine it self-consciously and subtly within the context of his other films and of earlier genre landmarks. Here, courtesy of Wolfgang Petersen's lean direction and Jeff Maguire's astute script, he achieves this within the crime thriller genre, finally breaking free after several flawed attempts (*Tightrope*, the several *Dirty Harry* sequels) from beneath Siegel's mantle. This is a fascinating reaffirmation and modification of his seminal role, by a star who could well be the last action hero to emote with his eyes rather than his muscles. Howard Hawks would be proud of him.

Tom Tunney

Lake Consequence

USA 1992

Director: Rafael Eisenman

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

10dB Inc
For The Zalman King
Collection Inc

Executive Producer

Zalman King

Producer

Avram Butch Kaplan

Associate Producer

Steven Kaminsky

Production Controller

Bob Shapiro

Production Co-ordinator

Oriana J. Bielawski

Unit Production Manager

Avram Butch Kaplan

Location Manager

Christine Bonnem

Casting

Sue Swan

ADR Voice:

The Loopys

Assistant Directors

Roe Sharon

Robert Scott

Screenplay

Zalman King

Melanie Finn

Henry Cobbald

Story

MacGregor Douglas

Director of Photography

Harris Savides

In colour

Camera Operators

Jürgen Walthers

B:

Michael Trim

Editors

James Gavin Bedford

Curtis Edge

Production Designer

Dominic Watkins

Set Decorator

Bella Serrell

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Kamdon and Associates

Music

George S. Clinton

Music Producers

George S. Clinton

Joel Iwataki

Songs

"Irene" by Bernard

Jolivet, performed

by Guitar Gable;

"Wounded Love"

by Tim O'Connor,

performed by Billy

Zane; "Hate St" by

and performed

by Animal Bag

Costume Design

Elisabetta Rogiani

Wardrobe Supervisor

Jillian Ann Kreiner

Make-up Artist

Sheri Short

Titles/Opticals

The Howard

Anderson Co

Supervising Sound Editor

Anthony Mazzei

Sound Editors

Ralph Osborn

Barbara Issak

Pat McCormick

Adam Sawelson

ADR Editors

James Hebenstreit

Albert Lord

Steve Dutkovich

Sound Recordists

Stephen Halbert

Scott Austin

Music:

Joel Iwataki

ADR Recordists

Weldon Brown

Debbie de Gorter

Foley Recordists

Brian Ruberg

Joan Chamberlain

Ultra stereo

Consultants:

Daniel W. Victor Jnr

Brian Slack

Sound Re-recordists

Gary Bourgeois

Scott Millan

Elmo Ponsdomenech

Music:

Joel Iwataki

Sound Effects Editors

Joe Earle

Alison Sanford

Bruce Tanis

Foley Artists

Alyson Dee Moore

Patricia Nedd

ADR Performers

Sandy Holt

Mimi Maynard

Glen Chin

Dana Lee

Dan Kwan

Nicholas Guest

Karen Huie

Pearl Huan

Elizabeth Sung

Bert Rosario

Stunt Co-ordinator

Spiro Razatos

Stunts

Richard Butler

Chris Durand

Maria R. Kelly

Vincent J. Mazzella Jnr

Patricia Tallman

Mike Ryan

Cast

Billy Zane

Billy

Joan Severance

Irene

May Karasun

Grace

Whip Hubley

Jim

Courtland Mead

Christopher

Dan Reed

Xiao

Christi Allen

Young Irene

Andria Litto

Teenage Irene

Ron Howard George

Semi Driver

Allan Graf

Irene's Father

mer working across the street, she spends her days watching him through her kitchen window and hangs around his trailer at night.

When Jim and Christopher go away on a fishing trip, Irene creeps into Billy's trailer and is accidentally driven off. She emerges to find herself on the shore of an unspoiled lake, where Billy's girlfriend, the pretty, surprisingly accommodating Grace is skinny-dipping. Billy, however, seems annoyed, and Irene demands to be driven into town so she can catch a bus home. But Chinese New Year celebrations are in full swing, and Irene has sex with Billy in a Chinese laundry instead.

In a nightclub, feeling reckless and encouraged by Grace, Irene starts necking with Xiao, a friend of Grace's, but Billy intervenes. The trio then go to a bath house, where Grace has acupuncture and Billy and Irene make love in the jacuzzi. Grace joins them; when Billy gives her his full attention, Irene sets fire to the curtains.

Back on the road, Irene begs Billy to take her with him, but they fight and he chases her into a field where they make love again, al fresco. She finally tells him the cause of her dark road fantasies: she was gang-raped by a rock band when she was 15. Billy decides that she must hold on to her family, because life with him would be too unpredictable. He drives her home and gets her washed and dressed. When Jim and Christopher return, Irene greets them tenderly.

Along with the innocent ingenue, the smouldering stranger and the free-love dispensing bisexual blonde, the repressed housewife has a time-honoured place in the pantheon of pornographic clichés. Zalman King, who delivers all except the ingenue, is no stranger to the obvious. *Lake Consequence* is presented in the credits as a film from the "Zalman King Collection", which sounds like a well-thumbed stack of Japanese etchings. Though King, who co-wrote *9½ Weeks* and directed *Two Moon Junction* and *Wild Orchid*, did not direct this time, the 'erotic' highlights certainly bear his signature: the wild street festivities, the lesbian sex, the voyeurism and the sex in public, in this case sandwich-style, under the impassive gaze of half a dozen old Chinese men in undershirts.

Banal though his fantasies may be, King is none the less a big softie: this 'Domestic Orchid' is the gentlest of sexual daydreams. Neither a cautionary



Fun in a Chinese laundry: Zane, Severance

tale where sexual transgression is punished, nor a quick leer at the perverse, it's a film about healing – a 15-year-old trauma is overcome, a marriage to a basically kind, decent fellow is saved. The equation of sex with redemption rather than guilt, destruction and death is quite progressive, if not entirely believable. At the very least, *Lake Consequence* lacks the vindictive streak of a lot of Hollywood's output, from film noir to *Fatal Attraction*. Irene is neither found out by her husband nor humiliated by her lover – the potentially dangerous dark stranger is in fact a benevolent marriage guidance counsellor who helps her to purge the past, let go of her inhibitions, and makes sure she gets home safely.

Unfortunately everything, from the long, meaningful close-ups (moody Irene, pouty Billy, kittenish Grace) to the absurdly luscious score, strains to convince you that there is actually more happening on screen than what you see. Despite the fact that Irene's secret trauma is supposed to be the catalyst for the story, nothing the characters do makes much sense, except insofar as it conveys them from one sex scene to another. And as these have had the life sterilised out of them (they're all discreet lighting, dreamy music and harmonious mingling of rippling muscles and silicone implants), it hardly seems to have been worth their while.

Joan Severance, ex-model, gourmet chef and two times *Playboy* cover star, has a foxy little face, wide blue eyes and no discernible personality; she's like an ageing porn starlet from the Anne Archer school of wryly sexy wives. Billy Zane – who with his extra-short haircut looks like Antonio Banderas – acquits himself more gracefully here than he did in *Orlando*. Still, his non-verbal communication skills remain approximate at best – when he's in the jacuzzi, he glowers at Irene and protrudes his lower lip balefully before turning to Grace. This, he explains later, none too convincingly, meant that he wanted Irene so much it scared him. For that matter, it's difficult to understand why Irene then gets so upset: if you're having a threesome in a Chinese bath house, it seems only common courtesy to attend to both partners.

In the end, too many loose ends are left lying around. When Irene is seeing off her family, she suddenly remembers that Christopher has left his favourite T-shirt behind and dashes into the house to retrieve it. She sprints back through the open door, but Jim has already driven off. Irene stands in the driveway clutching the shirt, then ventures inside Billy's trailer. What if, one is left wondering all through the film, her husband comes back to find the door open and their furniture gone? They live in LA, after all. But when Irene and Billy return to the house, it turns out that the burglars who came by not only shut the door, they also set the burglar alarm.

Caren Myers

El Mariachi

USA 1992

Director: Richard Rodriguez

Certificate	Cast
15	Carlos Gallardo
Distributor	El Mariachi
Columbia TriStar	Consuelo Gómez
Production Companies	Domino
Los Hooligans	Jaime De Hoyos
For Columbia Pictures	Bigotón
Producers	Peter Marquardt
Robert Rodriguez	Mauricio (Moco)
Carlos Gallardo	Reinol Martinez
Associate Producers	Azul
Elizabeth Avellán	Ramiro Gomez
Carmen M. De Gallardo	Cantinerero
Unit Production Manager	Jesus Lopez
Carlos Gallardo	Viejo Clerk
Screenplay	Luis Baro
Robert Rodriguez	Domino's Assistant
Story	Oscar Fabila
Robert Rodriguez	The Boy
Director of Photography	Poncho Ramon
Robert Rodriguez	Fernando Martinez
In colour	Azul's Rats
prints by Technicolor	Manuel Acosta
Camera Operator	Bodyguard
Robert Rodriguez	Walter Vargas
Editor	Roberto Martinez
Robert Rodriguez	Prisoners
Additional	Virgen Delgado
Editing/Conforming	Juanita Vargas
Robert Rodriguez	Yolanda Puga
George Hively	Female Bodyguards
Thomas Jingles	Jaime Rodriguez
Chris Jackson	Luis Cadena
Special Effects	Afredo Martinez
Robert Rodriguez	Gerardo Jaquez
Carlos Gallardo	Mario Mata
Music	Daniel Delgado
Marc Trujillo	Rosendo Ortiz
Alvaro Rodriguez	Cesar Cadena
Juan Suarez	José Salinas
Cecilio Rodriguez	Robert Santoyo
Eric Guthrie	Sabas Perez
Music Editor	Guadencio Martin
Robert Rodriguez	Juan Garcia
Songs	Maximo Martin
"Ganas De Vivir"	Difonso Quezada
by and performed	Manuel Vojer
by Juan Suarez;	Moco's Men
"Maldicion" by and	Alfredo Cisneros
performed by Marc	Keyboardist
Trujillo; "Mariachi	Alejandro Peña
Solo" by and	Pifia/Loco
performed by	Israel Reyes
Alvaro Rodriguez;	Taco
"Mariachi Tecnologia"	Clara Scott
by and performed	Moco's Manicurist
by Nestor Fajardo;	Maria Castillo
"Mariachi Love Theme"	Samuel Quiroz
by and performed	Roberto Delgado
by Cecilio Rodriguez	Jail Guards
Titles/Opticals	Fermin Barron
O.C.S. Freeze Frame	School Bus Driver
Sound Editor	H.B.
Robert Rodriguez	Pit Bull
Dolby stereo	Tito Tortuga
Additional Sound Effects	La Tortuga
Gary Krivacek	
Stunt Supervisors	7,320 feet
Manuel Salinas	81 minutes
Mario Hernández	

In a north Mexican town, a villain named Azul engineers a breakout from jail, with the help of henchmen, who bring him a guitar case filled with weapons. Local crime boss Moco – who had withheld ill-gotten gains from his ex-sidekick – is alerted by phone. Meanwhile, a young mariachi (musician) walks into town, hoping to secure a job in one of the local bars. The first bar he enters already has a 'band': one man with a keyboard. As the mariachi leaves, Azul enters and shoots four customers; the bartender telephones Moco, warning him of a lethal 'musician'. The young man makes his way to another bar, whose owner Domino says she will

employ him. He checks in at a hotel, whose proprietor phones Moco; his sleep is interrupted by a posse of Moco's gunmen. A chase ensues, in which two men shoot each other by accident, and other members of the gang are killed. The mariachi defends himself, first with his guitar case, then with a weapon belonging to one of the dead men. Domino hides him in her apartment.

Moco phones Domino's barman to warn him about the guitar case. Domino confronts her guest in the bath, and he convinces her of his true identity by singing her a song. That night, he performs to an enthusiastic crowd at Domino's. The next morning, he entrusts his precious instrument to her, while he returns to his hotel for a refund. Azul, visiting Domino's for a beer, picks up the wrong guitar case. Confronted by Moco's men, Azul finds his only weapon is a guitar. Azul makes it home, and sends his men to find the missing case of weapons. At Domino's, the mariachi is having his wounds tended to, when Moco rings. The mariachi learns that her bar was a gift from Moco, who continues to woo her. The musician accepts money from Domino to replace his guitar. Again, there is an attempt on his life; he jumps into a pickup, which happens to be headed for Moco's. When he is discovered, Moco informs his men they have the wrong man, and the mariachi is returned to town. Meanwhile, Domino agrees to take Azul to Moco's so that she can rescue the 'hostage'. Remembering the motorbike, the mariachi follows them, but arrives at Moco's too late: Moco kills both Domino and Azul, and wounds the musician in his playing hand. The mariachi manages to kill Moco, and he is left facing the gangster's henchmen. But they simply walk away, leaving the mariachi to ride off.

Richard Rodriguez, 24, is one of ten children from Texas – a former film student and cartoonist whose editing skills shine in this, his debut feature. He and partner Carlos Gallardo (who plays the movie's hapless protagonist) raised \$9,000 with which to make their quickie pic – intending to sell it in the Spanish-language marketplace. Using one borrowed camera, with Gallardo's mother as caterer, they shot *El Mariachi* in Mexico over 14 days, bringing it in with \$2,000 to spare. Like Leslie Harris' *Just Another Girl On the I.R.T.*, the team used a sample reel to attract wider attention. This trailer sold Richard Rodriguez to ICM, who then sold his movie to Columbia.

Its edges are frayed and it has no 'production values'. But *El Mariachi* boasts a neat and clever dynamic: its hero stumbles into a saga which replicates those fatalistic *corridos* he sings. *Corridos* have played a linchpin role in evolving a Mexican-American culture and identity. Descended from Spanish romance ballads, they grew into a form which depicts and eulogises current events. The personal 'I' is as central to them as a concern with romance and politics, thus the song format offers

a perfect framework for genre film.

Mexican-Americans, of course, will see this right away (as scholar Maria Herrera Sobek wrote recently, through *corridos* the US-bound immigrant "consciously wills himself or herself into the pages of history"). One American film that has notably utilised the form before is Robert M. Young's *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* in 1982, but that simply re-enacted one very famous song-story.

Rodriguez's energies are much more cinematic, and two facets of *El Mariachi* seem especially fresh. One is the afore-said editing, using hundreds of creative cuts. The other is a subtle but pervasive Chicano aesthetic. This often parodies spaghetti-Western machismo, as in the recurring joke about villains who, as power shifts, strike their matches on different portions of each other's anatomy. Generally, the film operates with the kind of verve which heralds a confident stylist. Tough guys who demand beers always thank the bartender – even when, to their horror, he presents a glass with each bottle. The cost-effective Casio keyboard stands in for the more romantic mariachi ensemble. And our hero ponders why his nemesis is called Azul, when he is never seen wearing blue.

Much of this humour is what Mexicans themselves decry as *pocho* – a polite term for 'gringoised'. And, though *chicanismo* is well-established in US life, it has rarely made the transition into American movies. Despite serious projects such as Edward James Olmos' *American Me* (1992) or Robert Redford's *The Milagro Beanfield War* (1987), *chicanismo* is still best glimpsed in the under-rated 1987 Cheech Marin comedy *Born in East L.A.*

Rodriguez, though, is more serious than comic. The whole set-up of *El Mariachi* is that of a pastiche Western. It may be a one-plaza, rather than a one-horse town. But *GunsMoke* rules obtain – the sole female character is a sympathetic saloon owner, and a single gangster (here a *gringo*) owns everything. Rodriguez uses the cliches to make an interesting point: his hero's *mejicano* dream – his familial destiny of carrying on as a mariachi – has lingered past its expiry date (this subtext is clear from the moment he enters town, when he passes a dusty bust of the one-time revolutionary President, Francisco I Madero).

In his search for soulfulness, the would-be mariachi refuses to smoke and drinks only soda pop (anything else would hurt his voice, he asserts proudly). Yet, in the end, he loses both his girl and his playing hand, without having enjoyed a single moment of manly action. Rodriguez uses a broad genre to make subtle points: about change and tradition, about Mexicans and Chicanos with separate values and voices. Despite its superficial sense of low-budget genre-as-usual, this project offers something truly new for American film. There will be high expectations for its forthcoming follow-up *El Mariachi: Corrido Dos* (*The Second Song*).

Cynthia Rose

Much Ado About Nothing

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Kenneth Branagh

Certificate	Costume Design
PG	Phyllis Dalton
Distributor	Make-up
Entertainment	Supervisor:
Production Company	Paul Engelen
Samuel Goldwyn	Artists:
Company/	Deborah Lanser
Renaissance Films	Tracey Lee
In association with	Sound Editors
BBC Films	Robert Gavin
Producers	Bill Trent
Stephen Evans	Campbell Askew
David Parfitt	Sound Recordist
Kenneth Branagh	David Crozier
Production Supervisor	Dolby stereo
Mark Cooper	Sound Re-records
Production Co-ordinator	Robin O'Donoghue
Iona Price	Dominic Lester
Production Manager	Foley Artists
Italy:	Pauline Griffiths
Rosanna Roditi	Lucy Fawcett
Location Managers	Stunt Co-ordinator
Paul Shersby	Bronco McLoughlin
Italy:	Stunts
Giorgio Gallani	Billy Horrigan
Production Consultant	Fight Director
Hugh Cruttwell	Nick Hall
2nd Unit Director	
Andrew Marcus	Cast
Assistant Directors	Kenneth Branagh
Chris Newman	Benedick
Justin Muller	Richard Briers
Carl Oprey	Leonato
Screenplay	Michael Keaton
Based on the play by	Dogberry
William Shakespeare	Denzel Washington
Adapted by	Don Pedro
Kenneth Branagh	Robert Sean Leonard
Text Consultant	Claudio
Russell Jackson	Keanu Reeves
Director of Photography	Don John
Roger Lanser	Emma Thompson
Colour	Beatrice
Technicolor	Kate Beckinsale
Steadicam Operator	Hero
Andy Shuttleworth	Gerard Horan
Opticals	Borachio
Peerless Camera	Richard Clifford
Company	Conrade
Graphic Design	Brian Blessed
Shaun Webb	Antonio
Editor	Patrick Doyle
Andrew Marcus	Balthasar
Production Designer	Jimmy Yuill
Tim Harvey	Friar Francis
Art Director	Imelda Staunton
Martin Childs	Margaret
Music	Phyllida Law
Patrick Doyle	Ursula
Music Director	Ben Elton
David Snell	Verges
Trumpet Effects	Edward Jewesbury
Mark Hadfield	Sexton
Orchestrations	Andy Hockley
Lawrence Ashmore	George Seacole
Additional:	Chris Barnes
John Bell	Frances Seacole
Music Supervisor	Conrad Nelson
Maggie Rodford	Hugh Oatcake
Music Editors	Alex Scott
Roy Prendergast	Benedick's Servant Boy
Preview:	Alex Lowe
Gerard McCann	Messenger
Choreographer	
Stuart Hopps	9,954 feet
	111 minutes

Messina, Sicily. Don Pedro and his men are returning victorious from war. Among those accompanying him are his close companions Claudio and Benedick and Don Pedro's bastard brother Don John. Leonato, Governor of Messina, welcomes the men to his villa. Beatrice, his niece, and Benedick are already acquainted and resume their game of witty raillery, each swearing that they will never marry anyone; while Claudio is smitten by Hero, Leonato's daughter. Don Pedro offers to broach the subject of mar-

riage with Leonato and Hero on Claudio's behalf. Don John hears of these plans and plots to cause mischief.

At a masked ball that evening, everyone flirts and dances. Don Pedro courts and wins Hero on Claudio's behalf, and the marriage is arranged. Meanwhile, Don Pedro plans to trick Beatrice and Benedick into falling in love. The next day, while Benedick is resting in the garden, Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato contrive for him to overhear them discussing how Beatrice secretly loves Benedick and is pining away unable to declare her feelings. Benedick is shocked, then overjoyed, and decides to court her. The same trick is played on Beatrice with similar results.

On the eve of the wedding, Don John shows Claudio and Don Pedro one of his men making love to a woman whom he calls 'Hero', and convinces them that Hero is unfaithful and unchaste. At the wedding, Claudio and Don Pedro denounce Hero. Her friends decide to circulate a rumour that she is dead in order to gauge the effect of the news on Claudio. Beatrice and Benedick confess their love to one another, but she insists that he must kill Claudio and revenge her cousin's name in order to prove his love.

Meanwhile, the local constable Dogberry catches the henchmen responsible for slandering Hero. When it comes to light that she was falsely accused, Claudio agrees to make amends by marrying Leonato's 'niece', who is described as Hero's exact likeness. The next day, Claudio accepts her in wedlock, delighted to discover that she is indeed the real Hero. Benedick and Beatrice, though now aware that they were tricked into falling in love, also marry. Don John is apprehended, and Don Pedro promises to punish him the next day. Harmony restored, everyone dances around the villa as flower petals rain down overhead.

● Kenneth Branagh's last exercise in filming Shakespeare, *Henry V*, had some roomy doublet and hose to fill. For a first-time director, Branagh made a plucky but ultimately botched effort at wrenching the text from under the glare of Olivier's rousing patriotic wartime interpretation, and into the shadow and slow-motion gore that 80s pacifism demanded. After practising on two more features (*Dead Again* and *Peter's Friends*) and a short film (*Swan Song*), the evidence suggests that he has learned what his strengths and weaknesses are and how to compensate accordingly.

Branagh's worst problem is imaginative banality – his camera tricks and casting coups are faddish rather than fresh. Paradoxically, this is also his biggest asset as a purveyor of lucrative filmic commodities for a specialized middle-brow market with upwardly mobile tastes. Branagh has a knack for aping the fashionable mannerisms of today's hot auteurs, like long tracking and steadicam shots à la Scorsese and Altman. As in *Henry V*, he makes nodding references to Welles with theatri-



Love's labour's lost: Emma Thompson, Kenneth Branagh

cal lighting, but he has none of the above's sense of timing or elan. What he's really good at is attracting big stars eager for a little cultural capital and then coaxing fairly good performances out of them. And audiences love it, since not only do you get to see Keanu Reeves barechested, plus 'sensual' footage of naked girls, but you also have the smug satisfaction of knowing that you are imbibing Real Culture at the same time. It's the cinematic equivalent of a health-food candy bar – fructose-sweet, fibrous and nominally nutritious but still bland.

Like Joseph Papp's 'Shakespeare in the Park' productions in New York, *Much Ado About Nothing* sets itself up as a showcase for its stars, then preens itself smugly while they display their skills at performing Elizabethan prose and blank verse. The camera trots along behind them, weaves among the crowd and wanders around the fountain while they recite their lines, like an awed audience member allowed on the stage but keeping a respectful distance. Only rarely does Branagh allow a reverse shot or cutaway while someone is speaking, unless they are discussing another character. Then a shot of the person in question is provided to guide slower viewers through the action – for example, when Claudio describes Hero as "the sweetest lady that ever I looked on." When Beatrice storms at Benedick after Hero has been denounced, the camera hovers shyly beyond the portal, like a child eavesdropping on its parents rowing. It's as if Branagh were afraid to interrupt Thompson's beautifully polished 'big scene', demonstrating the kind of respect one expects from a fellow actor and husband, but too obeisant for a good director.

Although the Beatrice-Benedick subplot usually dominates people's memories of the play, *Much Ado About Nothing* is one of the most formally integrated of Shakespeare's middle comedies. The smutty pun in the title ("no thing" is a common Shakespearian play on virginity and women's 'lack' of a penis) applies equally to the acerbic lovers, with their badinage about cuckoldry and inconstancy, and to Hero and Claudio, nearly destroyed by aspersions over (Hero's) nothing. Since a few scenes of ribald banter with Hero are cut to emphasise her purity, the film has to rely on other members of the

cast to maintain thematic integrity.

Attention is really drawn to what's going on in the melodrama sub-plot by the presence of Denzel Washington, subdued but graceful as Don Pedro, and Keanu Reeves as his bastard brother John (wooden, but then it was always a stock villain part). The most arresting performance is Richard Briers as Leonato. His delivery is exceptional, smoothly modulating between avuncular cheeriness and Lear-like rage in the wedding scene. Though Michael Keaton and Ben Elton as Dogberry and Verges seem a little lost, the rest of the mainly British cast troop along gamely, supporting the ensemble illusion the film is at pains to maintain. Even the poster recalls the non-hierarchical layout of the one used for *Peter's Friends*, with the major participants lined up in curtain-call arrangement. The two films have, after all, a lot in common: bickering lovers, rivalry, sentimentality, the spectre of sexually transmitted 'pestilence', and a big country house.

Overall, this is a earnest but fundamentally conservative film. With the current debate about the centrality of Shakespeare in the National Curriculum, one wonders if it might even be described as Conservative in the political sense. Apart from the multiculturalist gesture of casting a black actor in a conventionally 'white' role, everything else is played straight, complete with period costume and due deference to the original text. It neatly falls into line with a tradition of cinematic bardology that unquestioningly upholds Shakespeare as the ultimate emblem of high culture and good taste. The video will undoubtedly make a tidy mint in sales to lessonplan-hungry teachers. Unlike recent adaptations by Jarman, Greenaway and Edzard, no messy attempt is made to subvert, historicize, culturally appropriate or even update the holy writ. Apart from a little tastefully photographed bonking on a balcony, this is a Shakespeare film that even John Patten would find room for on the syllabus, despite his threats to abolish media studies in the classroom. Considering Olivier's governmental sponsorship for his own *Henry V*, Branagh, financially independent yet toeing the Party's aesthetic line, looks much less like the radical revisionist he first purported to be.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Passion Fish

USA 1993

Director: John Sayles

Certificate 15
Distributor Mayfair Entertainment
Production Company Atchafalaya
Executive Producer John Sloss
Producers Sarah Green, Maggie Renzi
Production Consultants Jan Foster, Jonathan Starch
Production Co-ordinator Beth A. Boyd
Production Manager Georgia Kacandes
Unit Manager Martha Griffin
Location Manager Deborah Parker
Post-production Supervisor Alexandra White
Casting Barbara Hewson, Shapiro
Location: Miriam Fontenot, Karen LeCorgne
Assistant Directors Steve Apicella, Annie Maver
Screenplay John Sayles
Director of Photography Roger Deakins
In colour
Video Playback Rick Whitfield
Editor John Sayles
Associate: Janice Keuhnelian
Production Designers Dan Bishop, Dianna Freas
Art Department Co-ordinator Beth Bernstein
Set Dressers Dan Smiley, David Luke McGee, Glenn B. Wilson
On-set: Jamie Bishop
Music Mason Daring
Music Performed by Mason Daring, Duke Levine, James Macdonnell, Stuart Schulman
Songs "Attack of the Mutant Guitars" by and performed by Duke Levine; "Bayou Pon Pon" performed by D. I. Menard, Eddie Lejeune, Ken Smith; "Oh, Negresse" by John Delafosse, performed by John Delafosse and the Eunice Playboys; "Grand Mamou" performed by John Delafosse and the Eunice Playboys; "La Danse de Mardi Gras" performed by The Balfa Brothers; "La Danse de Mardi Gras" performed by Stuart Schulman; "Zydeco Queen" by Willis Prudhomme, performed by Willis Prudhomme and the Zydeco Express; "Poor Man Two Step" by John Delafosse, performed by John Delafosse and the Eunice Playboys; "Bwana's Garden"

by James Macdonnell, George G. Ricile, performed by Loup Garou, John Hart
Costume Design Cynthia Flynt
Wardrobe Supervisor Elizabeth Feldbauer
Make-up Michal Bigger
Titles/Opticals R/Greenberg Associates
Supervising Sound Editor Philip Stockton
Dialogue Editor Bob Hein
Foley Editor Frank Kern
Sound Recordists John Sutton
Live Music: Leanne Ungar, Michael Golub
Foley: Stuart Levy
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordist Mel Zelniker
Sound Effects Editors Eugene Gearty, Skip Lievsay
Foley Artist Marko Costanzo
Cast
Mary McDonnell
May-Alice
Alfre Woodard
Chantelle
Vondie Curtis-Hall
Sugar
David Strathairn
Rennie
Leo Burmester
Reeves
Nora Dunn
Ti-Marie
Mary Portser
Precious
Angela Bassett
Dawn/Rhonda
Sheila Kelley
Kim
Nancy Mette
Nina
Lenore Banks
Nurse Quick
William Mahoney
Max
Nellie Stokes
Brett Ardin
Daniel Dupont
Therapists
Michael Mantell
Doctor Kline
Chuck Cain
Attendant
Shana Ledet Qualls
Paula Laffleur
Fans
Maggie Renzi
Louise
Marianne Muelleriello
Drushka
Victoria Edwards
Jessica
Amanda Carlin
Perky
Elaine West
Phoebe
Linda Castle
Lawanda
Leigh Harris
Kit
Tom Wright
Luther
Jennifer Gardner
Albertine
Shauntisa Willis
Denita
John Henry
Doctor Blades
Michael Laskin
Redwood Vance

12,172 feet
135 minutes

● A road accident leaves New York daytime soap actress May-Alice Colehaine paralysed from the waist down. Bitter and uncooperative, she makes little headway with rehabilitation therapy and soon discharges herself from hospital, deciding to return to her now-deserted childhood home in the Louisiana bayous.

Drinking heavily, she engages – and rapidly discharges – a succession of unsuitable paid companions until the arrival of a young Chicago black woman, Chantelle. Proud and reserved, Chantelle refuses to be dominated and the two women establish a wary relationship. Driving into town, Chantelle runs out of gas and gets a lift from smooth-talking zydeco guitarist Sugar LeDoux, but keeps him at arm's length. In town she meets local carpenter and swamp guide Rennie, who promises to come and fix up the house. May-Alice is visited by her gay Uncle Reeves; after he leaves she explores his old photographic studio.

Gradually the women's relationship improves, especially after Chantelle helps chase away two bitchy visitors from May-Alice's schooldays. When Rennie arrives, May-Alice is disconcerted to recognise in him a young tearaway she once knew; though he's now married with five children, she still finds him attractive. Chantelle starts an affair with Sugar, while May-Alice renounces drink – at Chantelle's urging – and takes up photography. Chantelle confesses she only recently kicked a drug habit, but May-Alice is undismayed.

Rennie takes both women on a swamp tour in his boat, after which May-Alice invites him to call again and resumes therapy with fresh enthusiasm. Chantelle's father arrives for a visit, bringing her daughter Denita. Though pleased by her new-found stability, he forbids her to visit Denita in Chicago. Redwood Vance, producer of May-Alice's soap, comes to offer her old part back – as a blind paraplegic. She scornfully turns him down. After he leaves, May-Alice and Chantelle realise they're stuck with each other for the time being, and settle in to make the most of it.

● *Passion Fish* marks a break with John Sayles' more recent work, the broad canvases, multiple casts and sweeping social perspectives of *Matewan*, *Eight Men Out* and *City of Hope*. Despite its substantial length, his new film is a chamber piece, essentially a two-hander, and as such looks back to his smaller-scale works like *Lianna* and *Baby It's You*. But like every Sayles film from *The Return of the Secaucus Seven* onwards, it explores the same theme – the gap between aspiration and achievement, characters who confront disillusionment and come to terms with what they are, or distort their lives hankering after what they failed to become.

It's a theme particularly germane to American society, where ambition of the high-vaulting, gosh-darn variety is virtually built into the system, making

the inevitable fall that much more poignant, and Sayles has used it with growing assurance to highlight the cracks in the American Dream. *Passion Fish* replays the same melody in a quieter, more meditative key.

Both May-Alice and Chantelle have been maimed by life, chopped down to less than they feel entitled to – one in a wheelchair, deprived of mobility and her career, the other stigmatised by her drug habit and denied access to her daughter. The film charts their relationship: from the initial edgy, tentative manoeuvres as their resentments collide, through the mandatory screaming row to final wry acceptance and almost-but-not-yet-quite friendship. As a subject, it veers perilously close to the feel-good mode. This being Sayles and not Hollywood mainstream, we're spared the glutinous declaration scenes; even so more than once, particularly towards the end, sentimentality looms.

What rescues the film from stickiness however, is the crisp, acute writing – and above all the acting, especially by the two leads. Sayles has always known how to compensate for technical limitations with skilled direction of his players, and from Mary McDonnell and Alfre Woodard (re-united from Kasdan's *Grand Canyon*) he draws superbly felt, astringent performances. Right from their opening exchanges ("You been doing this long?" demands May-Alice, glowering from her wheelchair. "No – you?" retorts Chantelle) the relationship crackles with life.

Though these two dominate, supporting roles are no less vividly etched, with some memorable cameos: Leo Burmester as May-Alice's gay uncle Reeves, wistfully recalling a project to design homoerotic Delftware depicting little Dutch boys in indelicate poses; and her soap replacement Nina (Nancy Mette) re-enacting her one-line screen debut in a duff science-fiction movie, complete with alternative readings ("I didn't ask for the anal probe. I didn't ask for the *anal* probe....").

Roger Deakins' photography makes the most of the film's Louisiana locations – especially in an atmospheric nocturnal trip through the bayous, all treacle-dark waters where owls flit and trees drift pale fingers. But this excursion, like several other events, comes across as just that – an excursion, rather than an integral part of the plot. Funny, moving, sharply written and outstandingly acted though it is, *Passion Fish* finally feels episodic and insubstantial, especially after the tight, intricately-plotted *City of Hope*.

The film falls between two stools – not quite meandering and inconsequential enough for real life, not quite structured enough for fiction. And at 130 minutes, it now and then leaves time for the mind to wander – to such questions as whether present-day Louisiana can really be such a racially harmonious, colour-blind idyll as it seems here. Reportage – or wishful thinking?

Philip Kemp

Puerto Escondido

Italy 1993

Director: Gabriele Salvatores

Certificate

15

Distributor

Mayfair Entertainment

Production Companies

Silvio Berlusconi Communications/Pentafilm/Colorado Film Production

Producers

Mario Cecchi Gori
Vittorio Cecchi Gori
Maurizio Totti

Associate Producers

Monica Ferroni
Arturo Brito

Production Supervisors

Laurence Finbell
Ugo Conti

Production Co-ordinator

Mexico:

Cesar Jimenez

Production Managers

Marco Mandelli

Mexico:

Ma Elena Galindo O

Marisa Gonzalez de la Vegas

Gianni Minà

Assistant Directors

Luca Lachin

Mexico:

Jesus Marin

Screenplay

Enzo Monteleone

Screen Collaborators

Diego Abatantuono

Gabriele Salvatores

Based on the novel by

Pino Cacucci

Director of Photography

Italo Petriccione

In colour

Camera Operator

Silvia Salamon

Steadicam Operator

Riccardo Brunner

Editor

Nino Baragli

Production Designers

Marco Belluzzi

Alejandro Olmas

Set Decorator

Mexico:

Francisco Lopez

Special Effects

Daniel Cordero

Music

Milan:

Mauro Pagani

Mexico:

Federico De Robertis

Songs

"Ansia" by Federico

De Robertis; "Suerte"

by Mauro Pagani;

"Caminando" by

Ruben Blades;

"Puerto Escondido"

by R. Tanica, C. Basio,

R. Tanica; "De Que

Callada Manera"

by Pablo Milanez,

"Valentina" by José

de Jesus, Martines

Gallegos (D.P.),

performed by Son

y la Rumba;

"Sabrosón" by

and performed

by Son y la Rumba;

"Guantanamera"

by José Martí,

"Hasta Siempre

Commandante"

by Carlos Puebla,

performed by Son

y la Rumba, Los

Guajiros; "Oye Como

Va" by Tito Puente,

performed by Santana;

"One Two Three Four...

Dancing" by D. Veona,

Dandy Lion, S. Duncan

Smith, performed

by Raffaella Carrà

Costume Design

Francesco Panni

Wardrobe

Mexico:

Adolfo Ramirez

Make-up

Maurizio Fazzini

Titles/Opticals

Studio 1

Sound Recordist

Amedeo Casati

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Alberto Doni

Sound Effects

Sound Track:

Luciano Anzellotti

Massimo Anzellotti

Stunts

Rafael Valdes

Alejandro Avendano

Cast

Diego Abatantuono

Mario

Valeria Golino

Anita

Claudio Bisio

Alex

Renato Carpentieri

Commissario Viola

Antonio Catania

Di Gennaro

Elena Callegari

Woman in Bank

Leonardo Gajo

Bank Colleague

Corinna Agustoni

Nurse

Niki Mondellini

Son y la Rumba Maid

Son y la Rumba

Jorge Fegan

Man in Pawnshop

Francisco Mauri

Policeman

Los Guajiros

Mexican Group

Yolanda Orizaga

Carmen

Yolo Lucio

Carmen's Son

Antonio Estrada

Thief

Julian Bujio

Prison Policeman

Gallo Tyson

deemed an accident; Mario, however, is the only witness who can testify to the contrary.

Mario returns to his flat, scared of telling what he knows, while Viola watches his every move. He learns from his answerphone that he has been abandoned by his girlfriend and that the bank manager wants to relocate him. He finds himself confronted by Viola's partner, who suspects Mario is hiding something and who himself wants to expose Viola for crimes he has committed in the past. But Viola interrupts the two men and shoots his partner. He forces Mario to drive him to the outskirts of town to dispose of the body. Mario is able to flee, and travels to Puerto Escondido, an obscure town in Mexico.

There he meets Alex, a young Italian, and his girlfriend Anita, who are living a frugal hippie life, inventing ever more eccentric schemes to make easy money. Alex persuades Mario to invest in buying a fighting cock, which loses its first fight. Then Alex and Anita convince him to buy a bagful of grass from some *campesinos* to sell to a 'reliable' client; but the client turns down their deal, and the three leave, only to be mugged by a group of stoned children.

In a restaurant, Mario bumps into Viola, who had followed him to Mexico but had become distracted by meeting a woman, Maria, and marrying her. The two of them have settled down and opened a restaurant, Viola having mended his ways. As a last resort to make some money, Alex and Anita suggest they ambush Anita's rich husband, whom she had married to get citizenship, and "re-distribute" the money to the poor (and themselves). They bungle the robbery and Alex is arrested. Mario turns to Viola and asks his help in springing Alex from prison. The rescue bid also goes wrong, and Mario is shot once again. He finds himself back in a hospital bed, greeted by his handcuffed collaborators. He asks the prison guard to draw the curtain open, so he can look at the sky.

● Gabrielle Salvatores' latest whimsical exploration of alternative lifestyles opens with a gallery of the hardened, lifeless faces of African immigrants selling cartons of cheap cigarettes and Bic lighters outside the sumptuous shop windows of central Milan. He closes the film with a smaller sequence of portraits; only this time it is Mexican peasants filmed against a sun-bleached wall who fix the camera with their suspicious stares. In truth, their expressions are not so different, reminding us perhaps that surviving on the bottom line can take the twinkle out of your eye whether you're an oppressed *campesino* or a luckless purveyor of dimestore trinkets in the frozen North.

If, on the other hand, you are a smooth, successful banker dedicated to designer labels and lack of adventure, there is nothing like an explosive re-evaluation of your existence to get you going. Salvatores' less-than-likeable



Happy campers: Valerie Golino, Claudio Bisio

hero is forced to re-consider his most cherished beliefs when he flees to Mexico to avoid entanglement in a Clouseau-esque chapter of farcical deaths. He starts predictably enough: cream linen suit, Cuba Libre on the beach, tequila slammers in the evening and a trip to the local cashpoint to replenish. But once the machines won't even give him the price of a cup of tea, he's in trouble. There follows a mildly diverting descent into languor, lethargy and lawlessness. The trouble is, none of this looks terribly irksome. Salvatores cannot help but imbue every scene of intimate conversation with spectacular sunsets, luscious guitar playing and a bitter-sweet sense of melancholy torpor which makes our hero's existential crisis look rather desirable – merely swapping one set of designers for another, in fact. There is no real sense of alienation, or homelessness, or fear.

At one point Mario, having lost all of his 'investments' (a fighting cock and a bagful of grass), sits in a bar and laments his loss of a "normal life in a regulated society". Not only does this sound less than convincing to a generation brought up on *Monty Python's* boring accountant sketches; Salvatores even has the nerve to end the scene with Valeria Golino's Anita purringly asking him for a slow clinch across the dance floor. Yes, it's true: losing all your possessions, being on the run from the police, forming an ever-so-gently erotic triangle with a buddy and beautiful woman is ultimately life-affirming. And unlike Butch and Sundance, you even survive the shooting at the end.

Puerto Escondido is a harmless enough piece of fun, but one can't help longing for more from an obviously talented director. Even before the current wave of scandals rocking Italy, it was clear that the excessive consumerism of the 80s *sorpasso* years was ripe for some trenchant criticism. Salvatores' hippy rambles across Greece (in *Mediterraneo*) and now Mexico rest rather too happily on the most seductive cliché of them all: get away from it all and find the true way to enlightenment and liberation. On the other hand, when Italy's most highly-acclaimed footballer, Roberto Baggio, declares himself a Buddhist, Salvatores might just be reading his nation's good mood correctly after all.

Peter Aspden

Sliver

USA 1993

Director: Phillip Noyce

Certificate

18

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount Pictures

Executive Producers

Howard W. Koch Jnr

Joe Eszterhas

Producer

Robert Evans

Co-producer

William J. Macdonald

Associate Producer

Laura Viederman

Production Associates

David B. Leener

Sean McCarron

Production Co-ordinator

Debbie Schwab

Unit Production Manager

E.C. (Itsi) Atkins

Location Managers

Ronald L. Carr

New York:

Patricia Ann Doherty

2nd Unit Director

David Ellis

Casting

Amanda Mackey

Cathy Sandrich

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Associate:

Karen Lynn Miller

Assistant Directors

Christopher T. Gerrity

John Hockridge

Joseph J. Kontra

Justin Moritt

2nd Unit:

John G. Scotti

New York:

Charles Zalben

Screenplay

Joe Eszterhas

Based on the novel

by Ira Levin

Director of Photography

Vilmos Zsigmond

Colour

DeLuxe

2nd Unit Directors

of Photography

Michael A. Benson

Laszlo Kovacs

Camera Operators

Ray J. de la Motte

2nd Unit:

Joseph E. Thibo

New York:

Cary Fisher

Steadicam Operators

Elizabeth Ziegler

Larry McConkey

Video/Computer

Supervisor

Liz Radley

Video Technical Supervisor

Joseph A. Unsinn III

Video Computer Operator

Brian Callier

Video Operators

Thomas L. Schurke

Steve Irwin

Rick Talmage

Roy Bean

Editors

Richard Francis-Bruce

William Hoy

Additional:

Lisa Citron

Production Designer

Paul Sylbert

Art Directors

Peter Lansdown Smith

New York:

Christopher Nowak

Art Department

Co-ordinators

Denise L. Heinrich

New York:

Elizabeth Meyerson

Set Design

Antoinette J. Gordon

Walter P. Martishius

New York:

Marion Kolsby

Set Decorators

Lisa Fischer

2nd Unit:

K.C. Fox

New York:

Leslie A. Pope

Illustrator

David J. Negron Jnr

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Darrell Pritchett

Gene Grigg

Special Effects

Ken Clark

New York:

John M. Ottesen

Ronald R. Ottesen Jnr

Music

Howard Shore

Orchestrations

Howard Shore

Music Supervisor

Tim Sexton

Music Editor

Bunny Andrews

Songs

"Carly's Song", "Carly's

Loneliness" by Michael

Cretu, performed by

Enigma; "Slave to the

Vibe" by V. Jeffrey

Smith, Peter Lord,

Guy Rott, performed

by Aftershock;

"Oh Carolina"

performed by Shaggy;

"Move With Me"

by Neneh Cherry,

Cameron McVey,

performed by Neneh

Cherry; "Can't Help

Falling In Love"

by George Weiss,

Hugo Peretti, Luigi

Creatore, performed

by UB40; "Penthouse

and Pavement" by

Ian Marsh, Martyn

Ware, Glenn Gregory,

performed by Heaven

17; "Slid" by Michael

Bryant, Michael

Tournier, Jonathan

Fugler, performed

by Fluke; "Skinflowers"

by The Young Gods,

Roli Mosimann,

performed by The

Young Gods; "Wild

at Heart" by Markus

Nikolai, Zip Campisi,

performed by Bigod 20;

"The Most Wonderful

Girl" by Oliver Adams,

Nikki Van Lierop,

Maurice Engelen,

performed by Lords

of Acid; "Unfinished

Sympathy" by Grantley

Marshall, Robert Del

Naja, Andrew Vowles,

J. Sharp, Shara Nelson,

performed by Massive

Attack; "Star Sail"

by Simon Jones,

Peter Salisbury, Nick

McCabe, Richard

Ashcroft, performed

by Verve

Costume Design

Deborah L. Scott

Wardrobe Supervisors

George L. Little

Carlene Passman

2nd Unit:

Darryl M. Athons

Make-up Artists

Tricia A. Sawyer

Sharon Ilson

Body:

Laura De'Atley

2nd Unit:

Patricia A. Gerhardt

Dennis M. Glass

New York:

Kymbra Callaghan

Lydia Milars

Title Design

Robert Dawson

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Sound Design/Supervising

Sound Editors

Tim Chau

Rick Franklin

Supervising

Dialogue Editor

Don Malouf

Dialogue Editors

Nils Jensen

Joseph A. Ippolito

Frank Howard

Richard Burton

Supervising ADR Editor

J. Christopher Jargo

ADR Editors

Joe Mayer

Nick Korda

Stephen Janisz

Michele Perrone

Supervising Foley Editor

Sukey Fontelieu

Foley Editors

Pam Bentkowski

Christine Danelski

Steve Mann

Kim Secrist

Bob O'Brien

Sound Recordists

Tom Nelson

ADR:

Bob Baron

Foley:

Greg Curda

Music:

John Richards

2nd Unit:

Thomas Brandau

Douglas Axtell

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Kevin O'Connell

Rick Kline

Sound Effects Editors

David Kern

Douglas Jackson

Albert Gasser

Gary Krivacek

Gary Mundheim

Foley Artists

David Lee Fein

Ken Dufva

Special Sound

Effects Design

John Paul Fasal

Stunt Co-ordinators

Bud Davis

David Ellis

Steve Boyum

Stunts

Michael Haynes

Spiro Razatos

Cheryl Wheeler-Dixon

Merritt Yohnka

Cast

Sharon Stone

Carly

William Baldwin

Zeke

Tom Berenger

Jack

Polly Walker

Vida

Colleen Camp

Judy

Amanda Foreman

◀ phously perverse hatchet-woman to that of a recently divorced 35-year-old book editor. But this casting against type goes no further than replacing the ice-pick under the bed with surveillance cameras concealed in the walls, and putting them in the hands of William Baldwin's creepily super-capable landlord.

The premise of Stone's character thus established (we know next to nothing of her former marriage except that it was unhappy), cliché follows cliché, from her emotional state being coded through her clothing – muted colours, soft fabrics buttoned up to the neck – to the sex games in a restaurant, complete with the regulation reaction shots of incredulous middle-aged diners. The lingerie that Zeke gives her is a metonymic echo of the totemic cocktail dress of *Basic Instinct*, bringing that film's Catherine Trammell firmly back into the frame. But when it comes to portraying a woman-in-peril, Stone doesn't fit the bill; to adopt the Hitchcockian frame of reference, she's closer to Kim Novak's glacial unfathomability than to Tippi Hedren's tousled panic.

But the real star of the film is its video technology. From his state-of-the-art control room, Zeke, unknown to them, surveys the lives of the apartments' occupants, transforming his building into a high-tech, high-rent panopticon. Or, more accurately for Zeke, an interminable soap opera with as many vying narratives as there are inhabitants. Noyce's use of video flits between being palmcorder-pornography and surveillance of 'Real Life' – tapping into a trend that the eponymous American TV series has recently bought to British screens. The 'secondary soaps' that are the other lives of the block appear far more fascinating than Zeke's, but they are evoked only to be dropped or dealt with in the narrative equivalent of a channel-hopping flourish.

The four-act mini-drama of child abuse that takes place within the film via its video is the starkest expression of this tendency and signals one of *Sliver's* major missed opportunities. Carly's growing fascination with Zeke's voyeuristic intervention into other lives is prevented from being developed by the increasingly irrelevant murder mystery. Ultimately, the film becomes an unsatisfying Stone-Baldwin two-hander played out under the eye of the ubiquitous surveillance camera, with the video-soap back-stories proving potentially far more interesting than the formulaic thriller that houses them.

Sliver has a couple of interesting minor characters in Polly Walker's West End girl uttering profanities with perfect SW1 diction, out of her depth and up to her neck in Manhattan coke; and Keene Curtis' NYU professor teaching an option in 'The Psychology of the Lens'. A pity he doesn't last through the first reel – *Sliver* would have benefited from a more equal ratio of old-fashioned psychology to balance its high-tech lens fixation.

Chris Darke

El Viaje

(The Voyage)

Argentina/France 1991

Director: Fernando E. Solanas

Certificate
Not yet issued

Distributor
Metro Pictures

Production Companies
Cinesur (Argentina)/
Les Films du
Sud (France)

In association with
Films A 2

Televisión Española
Sociedad Estatal
Quinto Centenario
Channel Four

Instituto Mexicano
de Cine

Ministère de la Culture
et des Grands Travaux
Centre National de la
Cinématographie

Executive Producers
France:
Djamila Olivesi
Brazil:
Assunção Hernandez
Mexico:
Grazia Rade
Peru:
Luis Figueroa
Jorge Vignati

Producers
Fernando E. Solanas
Mexico:
Producciones la Galera

Co-producer
Brazil:
Raiz Produções

Line Producer
Envar El Kadri

Production Directors
Dolly Pussi
France:
George Marschallk

Production Associates
Brazil:
Marcos Madalena
Moises Magalhaes
Sara Silveira
Peru:
José Valdivia Diaz
Mexico:
Felipe Marino
Alejandro Clancy

Production Co-ordinators
Settimio Presutto
Ushuaia:
Mabel Rodriguez
Peru:
Jorge Vignati Ojeda
Argentina:
Mario Garcia

Assistant Directors
Horacio Guisado
Ushuaia:
Lidia Navarro
Epecuen:
Sara Barlacina
Brazil:
Tania Savietto
Mexico:
Roberto Marin
France:
Gaspar Noé
Argentina:
Beatriz Bensusan

Screenplay
Fernando E. Solanas

Director of Photography
Felix Monti
In colour

Additional Photography
Peru/Mexico:
Robert H. Mateo

Camera Operators
Roberto H. Mateo
2nd:
Theo Robichet

Video Director
Marcos Lopez

Editors
Alberto Borello
Jacqueline Meppiel
France:
Jacqueline Meppiel
Jacques Gaillard

Editing Advisers
Jacques Gaillard
Enrique Muzio

Production Designer
Fernando E. Solanas

Art Director
Peru:
Luis Figueroa

Set Design
Brazil:
Cristiano Amaral
Henrique Lanfranchi

Set Decorators
Argentina:
Graciela Fragua
Victoria Solanas

Drawings
Alberto Breccia

Special Effects
Estudios Nazar
Daniel Celia
Daniel Danni
Waldo Halebijan
Ruben Buelta

Music
Egberto Gismonti
Astor Piazzolla
Fernando E. Solanas

Music Director
Jacques Morelembaum

Music performed by
Egberto Gismonti
Robertinho Silva
Jaques Morelembaum
Zeca Assumpcao
Orquesta
Transharmonica
d'Amia de Omrac

Music Editor
Emmanuel
Chamboredon

Songs
"El Viaje" by Astor
Piazzolla, Fernando
E. Solanas, performed
by Nestor Marconi,
Liliana Herrero;
"Ushuaia" by Fernando
E. Solanas, performed
by Fito Paez, Liliana
Herrero; "Milonga"
by Astor Piazzolla,
performed by Nestor
Marconi; "Floto en
Buenos Aires" by
Fernando E. Solanas,
performed by Fito Paez;
"Libertario" by
Fernando E. Solanas

Wardrobe
Argentina:
Jorge Ferrari

Costumes
Lima:
Maria Carmen Herrera

Make-up
Brazil:
Patricia Esther Da Silva
Argentina:
Mirta Blanco

Titles
Estudios Nazar
Daniel Celia
Daniel Danni
Waldo Halebijan

Sound Directors
Anibal Libenson
Argentina:
Sergio Albertoni
Mario Calabrese

Adviser
Rio Gallegos:
Orlando Stirnemann

Cast
Walter Quiroz
Martin
Soledad Alfaro
Vidala
Ricardo Bartis
Monitor
Cristina Becerra
Violeta
Marc Berman
Nicolás

Chiquinho Brandao
Paizinho
Franklin Caicedo
Rower
Carlos Carella
Tito the Hopegiver
Angela Correa
Janaina
Liliana Flores
Wayta
Juana Hidalgo
Amalia Nunca
Justo Martinez
Faustino
Kike Mendive
Américo Inconcluso
Francisco Napoli
Raúl
Fito Paez
Pablo
Nathan Pinzon
District Attorney
Eduardo Rojo
Garrido
Dominique Sanda
Helena
Fernando Siro
Federico
Atilio Veronelli
President Rana
Silvio Herbedt
Walter Guaiquin
Martin's Friends
Micaela Martinelli Nattero
Martin's Sister
Adrian Sanchez
Newspaper Vendor
Julieta Sanchez
Neighbour
Mario Nuñez
Santiago Carriac
Julian Carriac
Musicians
Juan Acosta
Tide Announcer
Martin Caparros
Priest
Marisa Centanin
Washerwoman
Maria Luz Enciso
Teacher
Hector Gance
President Goolfh
Horacio Gonzalez
Soretero
Marcos Lopez
Priest at Soup Kitchen
Veronica Ljinaz
Weather Forecaster
Jorge Mayor
Pablo's Father
Inés Molina
Lucrecia
Lidia Navarro
Biology Teacher
Bosquin Ortega
Physics Teacher
Patricia Pagani
English Teacher
Macoco Perez
Violeta's Father
Pablo Rodriguez
Teacher

Angel Taborda
Fireman
Carlos Trigo
OPA Announcer
Jorge Ochoa
Announcer
Miguel Zarcovich
Ramirez
Ana Hubert
Boutique Owner
Cesar de Souza
Parana
Luis Tadeu Pati
Stepfather
Joao Acayabe
Driver
José Gomes Lima
Border Official
Rui Guilherme Lima
Policeman
Manfredo Bahia
Hold-up Man
Katia Brito
Country Woman
Grupo de Teatro
Ornitorrinco
Ornitorrinco Theatre
Group
Mauro de Almeida
President Rómulo
José Rubens Chacha
Teresa Freire
TV Announcers
Andre Caldas
Marina Mesquita
Guto Vasconcelos
Flyer Distributors
Gonzalo Cardoso
Libertario
Rafael Delluchi
Spanish Prisoner
Rafael Garay
Child
Jorge Chara
Quechua Master
Dionisio Oquendo
Hairdresser
Teresa Lastarria
Godmother
Romulo Coahuana
Bicycle Thief
Angel Valdivia
Yury Valdivia
Accomplices
Comunidades de Poroy
Senqua y Pichingotos
The People
Cristina Banegas
Dominique Sanda's
Voice
Alberto Segado
Marc Berman's Voice
Tony Middleton
Welsh Folks' Voices
Susana Sisto
Violeta's
Grandmother's Voice
Susana Cantero
English Teacher's Voice
Eduardo Avakian
Additional Voices

13,500 feet
150 minutes

Subtitles

● Part One: *The End of the World*. Martin Nunca, a 17-year-old student at a remote college in Tierra del Fuego, is increasingly discontented both with the impoverished educational system and with his home life. His parents separated when he was six and his mother has remarried; Martin loathes his stepfather, and dreams of tracing his real father Nicolás, a former comic strip artist last heard of working as an anthropologist in Brazil. During a bitter winter, when the whole area is shaken by earthquakes, the students shiver at their desks, mercilessly harangued by the staff. Martin's friend Pablo, expelled for misbehaviour, leaves for Buenos Aires, confident of success as a musician. Martin has an affair with a local girl, Violeta; he is delighted when she becomes pregnant, but she insists on an abortion. Embittered, he sets out northwards on his

bicycle, on a quest to find his father.

Part Two: *To Buenos Aires*. Ferried across the Strait of Magellan, Martin loses himself on the borders of Chile and New Patagonia, a British colony inhabited only by oil rig workers. Back on the road, he is given a lift by blind Caribbean truck driver Américo Inconcluso, who cheerily lets fate guide him on the highway. Martin also encounters a mysterious girl in a red dress, who silently accepts a ride on his cycle crossbar. Nearing Buenos Aires, Martin finds the whole area is flooded, including the home of his grandmother; she has just been visited, to her delight, by the floating coffin of his recently deceased grandfather. She tells Martin that his father has remarried, to a girl called Janaina, and with the help of her brother Rogelio tows the coffin back to the cemetery. Martin meets briefly with Pablo, whose rock group is performing on a free-floating pontoon, and again with the girl in red. He also finds the legendary Herald of Hope, Tito, a character familiar from his father's artworks; although a fugitive from the police, Tito claims that his resounding drum beats stimulate the pulse of the Argentine people.

Part Three: *Across Amerindia*. Proceeding north through Bolivia, Martin reaches Peru, where he collapses from exhaustion and is looked after by a peasant family. In Cuzco, his bicycle and backpack are stolen, but he is befriended by a pregnant girl. He enters Brazil by riverboat, enjoys an embrace with the girl in red, and avoids the border authorities with the help of a travelling preacher and a child acrobat. After working as a labourer in a goldmine, he traces Janaina, who shows him videos of his father, now in Mexico; Nicolas left just in time to avoid legislation requiring everyone to wear restraining harnesses. With Americo's help, Martin recovers his bicycle and backpack and crosses Venezuela to the Caribbean coast where he witnesses a meeting of the Association of Countries on Their Knees. At last in Mexico, he looks for his father at Teotihuacan; a friend shows him his father's studio but says that Nicolás's whereabouts are unknown. Back in Américo's truck, with the girl in red hitching a ride, Martin imagines a reunion with his father on the road. Then he realises that his father's gift has been the journey he has just undertaken. He no longer needs to search for the parent who will always be part of him.

● Fernando Solanas' outspoken contempt for Carlos Menem's administration in Argentina nearly cost him his life – an assassination attempt confined him to a wheelchair for most of the post-production on *The Voyage*. But it is surprising to find that his new film, while not exactly conciliatory, has a tone more of wry exasperation than of the militant fury that made his *Hour of the Furnaces* (1968) such a resounding debut. The midnight arrests, the 'disappearances' and the executions which were already fad-



Continent hopping: Atilio Veronelli

ing memories by the end of his previous film *Sur* (1988) have now been replaced by the spectre of an ineffectual and self-effacing bureaucracy seemingly common not just to Argentina but to the whole of Latin America. Wherever Solanas' young voyager goes, on a selective itinerary that skirts some obvious trouble spots like Nicaragua and Salvador, he finds much the same gloomy acquiescence to an impoverished government and the steady collapse of public services.

The boy's hunt for his father is doomed to disappointment, in the sense that Nicolás was of a generation that had causes to fight but found nothing substantial to put in their place. The vanished champion, bequeathing all kinds of perspectives and reassurances, shows an excellent command of Argentina's history but contributes nothing more than an unfounded optimism in its future. The restoration process will have to be his son's unenviable task. "Fathers are never there when you need them," says Solanas; he means not only that they can't live your life for you but also that you can't live theirs. Martin's odyssey is also a search for his fatherland – a fatherland which, in Solanas's view, is acutely absent when needed, although it surrounds him with a spectacular geographical presence.

While trying to put across the ingenuous viewpoint of his anxious traveller, Solanas – similarly of a previous generation – is unable to avoid a paternalistic indulgence: his first image of Martin shows the boy fading in like a ghost, an imaginary figure still uncertain of form and purpose. This hesitancy continues throughout Martin's adventures, part-dream, part-fantasy, some of which almost exclude him entirely as if, paradoxically, the film were actually about a father's easily-distracted attempts to picture an unknown offspring.

The ominous surname Nunca

('Never') for both father and son, contributes to a sense of playful indecision (the man who never was? a trip through Never-Never Land?) while alerting us to other possible references – the Frog President, the blind truck driver, the Drummer of Hope – more easily recognised by audiences familiar with the satirical comic-strips of Hector Westerfeld and Alberto Brescia, from which some of the characters have been derived. And it seems more than coincidence that Martin himself appears named after the founding father of Argentine independence, José de San Martín, whose statue Solanas dismissively blows away on the wind, an unreliable construction of cardboard. Might his successor enjoy greater stability? Solanas wisely offers no assurances, suggesting only that his countrymen should get on their bikes. At its conclusion, the film reveals itself as just a lengthy preface, a scene-setting – and magnificently eye-catching – travelogue through a continent's identity crisis. Allowing the capering figure of his father to career away on a highway to nowhere, Martin considers the lessons learned; he appears poorly equipped to cope with any of them.

Torn between an affection for drama and an enthusiasm for satire, Solanas quickly allows the scene-setting of his first 'chapter' (an affectation surviving from his earliest theories of political cinema) to drift into absurdism. This leaves Dominique Sanda with a misleading cameo as Martin's mother, played tearfully straight, but permits a wonderful rendering of an archaic college where snow piles up on the desks, portraits of past dignitaries are perpetually thundering to the floor, and the staff attempt in a squeaking frenzy to stimulate their frozen pupils. The local town tilts unpredictably day by day so that the inhabitants tend to be discovered at odd angles to their houses and furniture. And while the affair between Martin

and Violeta (whose hemlines are distractingly ill-chosen for the icy conditions) is all delirious cycle-rides and dancing in the snowy woods, Solanas can't resist the diversionary invasion by a blind grandparent at an intimate moment.

Violeta's abortion, signpost to a different kind of film, has resonances in Martin's subsequent liaisons: the girl who shelters him in an Inca temple is resignedly pregnant, and the girl in red who haunts his imagination is constantly dodging physical involvement. Encapsulating the fragile stability of these interludes, there is a magical glimpse at one point of a family waving from their house among the trees as Martin is carried past, unable to respond. As if caught unawares by stoical human resilience in its considerations of chaos, *The Voyage* is engagingly extended by innumerable such asides and detours: the genial *petroleros* who reveal that unwanted bits of wasteland get sold off as new British colonies; the fugitive Drummer who demonstrates that his inspiring performance is all on a tape played inside his instrument; the Peruvian street vendor who only sells matches singly and salt by the pinch; the widow who serves tea and scones in her flooded living-room.

Finding in the outskirts of Buenos Aires a wilderness of flood-water, Solanas makes it the visual metaphor for his drowning country, a swamp of opportunists who auction water-plots in the 'Venice of the South', cheered by a President in flippers: "Swim for it, Argentinians!" Superbly extending the ridicule, Solanas later stages a tennis tournament at which all players are on their knees, implicitly a Third World posture. "Kneeling," proclaims the President, "represents the only sensible position in situations of danger." Given the director's own experience, this is the most troubling lesson his wandering acolyte will have to master.

Philip Strick

RE-RELEASE

Les Enfants du Paradis

France 1945

Director: Marcel Carné

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

Société Nouvelle

Pathé Cinéma

Executive Producer

Raymond Borderie

Production Co-ordinator

Fred Orain

Production Manager

Louis Théron

Assistant Directors

Pierre Blondy

Bruno Tireux

Screenplay

Jacques Prévert

Director of Photography

Roger Hubert

Black and white

Camera Operator

Marc Fossard

Editors

Henry Rust

Madeleine Bonin

Art Director

Alexander Trauner

Set Decorators

Lucien Barsacq

Raymond Gabutti

Music

Maurice Thiriet

Joseph Kosma

Pantomime Music

Georges Monqué

Music Performed by

Société des Concerts

du Conservatoire

Costume Design

Antoine Mayo

Sound Editor

Robert Teisseire

Sound Recordist

Jacques Carrère

Cast

Arletty

Garance

Jean-Louis Barrault

Baptiste Debureau

Pierre Brasseur

Frédéric Lemaître

Marcel Herrand

Lacenaire

Pierre Renoir

Jéricho, the Old

Clothes Man

Maria Casarès

Nathalie

Etienne Decroux

Anselme Debureau

Fabien Loris

Avril, Lacenaire's

Assistant

Léon Larive

Stage Doorman,

'Funambules'

Pierre Palau

Stage Manager,

'Funambules'

Marcel Peres

Director, 'Funambules'

Albert Rémy

Scarpia Barrigni

Jane Marken

Madame Hermine

Gaston Modot

Fil de Soie, the

Blind Beggar

Louis Salou

Count Edouard

de Montray

Jacques Castelot

George, First Dandy

Jean Gold

Raphael Patorni

Dandies

Guy Favière

Debt Collector

Paul Frankeur

Police Inspector

Lucienne Vigier

Cynette Quéro

Pretty Girls

Gustave Hamilton

Stage Doorman,

'Grand Théâtre'

Rognoni

Director,

'Grand Théâtre'

August Boverio

Paul Demange

Jean Diener

Authors

Louis Florencie

The Policeman

Marcelle Monthil

Marie

Robert Dhéry

Célestin

Lucien Walter

Ticket Seller

Jean-Pierre Delmon

Little Baptiste

Jean Lanier

Iago

Habib Benglia

Arab Attendant

17,039 feet

188 minutes

Subtitles

Part One: *Le Boulevard du Crime* (The Boulevard of Crime). Paris, 1840. The beautiful adventuress Garance is discontented in her relationship with Lacenaire, a suave murderer who masquerades as a public scribe. She attracts the attention of Baptiste Debureau, a mime at the Funambules theatre, who prevents her being wrongfully arrested during one of his street performances. Baptiste, however, is adored by Nathalie, another actress at the Funambules, and has a rival for Garance's affections in the ambitious Romantic actor Frédéric Lemaître. Baptiste traces Garance to a bar where he publicly humiliates Lacenaire by dancing with her. When they are alone together that night, Baptiste panics and leaves her; Garance finds solace with Frédéric. The ►

◀ wealthy Count Edouard de Montray sees Garance's performance at the Funambules and declares his love for her: she is uninterested, but her admirer insists that he will always remain her servant. Later, when police accuse her of being implicated in a murder that Lacenaire has committed, Garance turns to the Count for protection.

Part Two: *L'homme blanc* (The Man in White) 1847. Baptiste, now a famous performer, has married Nathalie and has a son. Frédérick, the most popular actor of his time, becomes friendly with Lacenaire. Garance, who has been travelling with the Count, has returned to Paris; she secretly visits the Funambules and realises that she has only ever loved Baptiste. Frédérick, although jealous, abandons hope. Despite his wife's pleas, Baptiste arranges to meet Garance for one last time. Lacenaire, after a public altercation between Frédérick and the Count, murders the Count. Nathalie, accompanied by her own child, discovers Baptiste and Garance together; Garance, deciding that she cannot split up the family, leaves Baptiste and flees into the carnival crowd on the Boulevard. Baptiste, pursuing her, is swallowed up in the throng.

While criticism has successfully recuperated the fortunes of 'overlooked' masterpieces of the inter-war years – notably Renoir's *La Règle du jeu* and Vigo's *L'Atalante* – the reputation of the 1945 *Les Enfants du paradis* in France seems to have come about less through the good offices of critics than through its consistent popularity and steady accumulation of prestige. This process culminated in its special 1971 César award as "the best film in the history of talking pictures in France", thus cementing its status as myth, monument and *monstre sacré* of French cinema. It is as a monument, a French *Gone With the Wind* (as it was advertised by post-war American distributors), that it tends to be received abroad.

Dubbed "a megalomaniac of décor" by André Bazin, Marcel Carné had gained a reputation for excess during his previous film, the medieval fairy-tale romance *Les visiteurs du soir* (1942). Despite the material constraints on production under Nazi occupation, the director further embellished this reputation with *Les Enfants* by expansively recreating Restoration Paris on a budget five times that of the standard wartime production. Carné not only recreates the city's infamous Boulevard du Temple, where the majority of Paris' theatres and – legend has it – unsolved felonies were concentrated; but also populates it with crowds of extras, and draws his principal characters from personalities of the time: the famed mime Debureau, the period's leading romantic actor Lemaître and the notorious gentleman-assassin Lacenaire. This applied recreation of historical characters and milieux was, in part, a strategic manoeuvre in the face of German edicts on style and subject matter. Realism – of the 'poetic' or soci-

ological variety – was out.

The success of Carné's change of style was no doubt assisted by the enduring core of his production team, initially assembled for *Drôle de drame* (1937), including Jacques Prévert as screenwriter, Joseph Kosma as composer and Alexander Trauner as set designer (the latter two, both being of Hungarian Jewish background, collaborated on *Les Enfants* clandestinely). The film features an ensemble of leading actors – Arletty, Barrault, Brasseur, Herrand – all of whom the director had worked with previously in different configurations. *Les Enfants*, then, is a film of multiple authors but also the apex of collaborative efforts and working relationships forged in the traditions of French studio production; Carné's follow-up *Les Portes de la nuit* (1946) was a commercial failure and indicative of how rapidly tastes had changed.

Multiple authors and multiple pleasures: the film's abiding richness resides in the orchestration of each individual's technical mastery. Carné's camera is classically self-effacing, serving the ensemble and its environment rather than itself. When Lacenaire murders the Count and the camera refuses to go with the action, focusing instead on the appalled reaction of Lacenaire's henchman Avril, the scene is unusually forceful precisely because of the unexpected archness of its execution and the sudden assertion of personal style.

"It seems more modern now than it did in 1949," wrote Raymond Durgnat in 1965, and the impression persists. Perhaps this is due to French cinema's return, over the last decade, to the values of extravagant decor, historical spectacle and literary adaptation, with films from *Cyrano de Bergerac* to *Les Amants du Pont Neuf* among the (il)legitimate offspring of the traditions crystallised in *Les Enfants*.

The feature that has intensified with time is the film's vertiginous self-reflexivity, and while one would expect nothing less of a work that consciously explores the art/life duality,

Les Enfants delivers this and more in a structural origami of doubled allusions. This is visible in its two-part structure but equally in the shot that opens each part, that of the Funambules' proscenium arch, the frame within the frame coldly, formally composed as a classical signal of the *mise en abîme* and mined here for all it is worth. If this image is set up with its counterpart in the image of the teeming boulevard, they are not so much opposed as developed as functions of one another, as interchangeable "stages". Just as the film folds the boulevard onto the stage and back again, so too the roles and identities "performed" in one space are picked up, inverted or intensified by the other. The current that links these principal circuits of the film is desire, here given its purest incarnation in the character of Garance, who represents a desire that resists being fixed or captured, and that can mobilise (Lemaître's robust actor's ego immediately transforms his jealousy into the key to his Othello performance) just as much as immobilise (Baptiste literally freezes onstage when he glimpses Garance in the audience, his muteness extending to become immobility).

While these reflexive elements are present in the film's first part, it is the second – with its change of tone from lightheartedness to sobriety, youthful ambition to the mixed blessings of mature success, love to death – that really puts them to work. The film ends with Garance pursued by Baptiste and borne away from the crowd. By this time the resonances of each 'stage' have become so interlinked for this moment to suggest overwhelmingly contrasting emotions of loss and renewal, of the end of the affair and Garance's joyful returning home. It is a moment that might also stand metaphorically for the film's present power, less as a monument marking the 'end' of a film-making tradition than as a 'return' for a film whose structural complexity re-emerges as astonishingly rich.

Chris Darke



Playing to the gallery: Louis Salou

RE-RELEASE

Le Samourai

France 1967

Director: Jean-Pierre Melville

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Company

Filmel/C.I.C.C (Paris)/
Fida Cinematografica
(Rome)

Producers

Raymond Borderie
Eugène Lépicié
Production Co-ordinator
Jean Pieuchot

Production Manager

Georges Casati

Assistant Directors

Georges Pellegrin

Screenplay

Jean-Pierre Melville
Based on the novel

The Ronin by

Joan McLeod

Director of Photography

Henri Decaë

In colour

Camera Operators

Studio:

Jean Charvein

Location:

Henri Decaë

Editors

Monique Bonnot

Yo Maurette

Art Director

François De Lamothe

Music

François De Roubaix

Supervising Sound Editor

Alex Pront

Sound Editor

Robert Pourret

Sound Recorder

René Longuet

Cast

Alain Delon

Jef Costello

François Périer

The Inspector

Nathalie Delon

Jane Lagrange

Cathy Rosier

Valerie

Jacques Leroy

Gunman

Jean-Pierre Posier

Olivier Rey

Catherine Jourdan

Hat-check Girl

Michel Boisrond

Wiener

Robert Favart

Barman

André Salgues

Garage Man

Roger Fradet

Carlo Nell

Robert Rondo

André Thorent

Pierre Vaudier

Maurice Magalon

Policemen

Georges Casati

Damolini

Jack Léonard

Garcia

Jacques Deschamps

Police Clerk

Gaston Meunier

Maitre d' at Hotel

Jean Gold

Georges Billy

Clients at Nightclub

Ari Aricardi

Bonnafoix

Poker Players

Catalano

Inspector

Carl Lechner

Jef Double

Maria Maneva

Young Girl with

Chewing Gum

9,426 feet

105 minutes

Subtitles

After setting up an intricate alibi with his lover Jane Lagrange, Jef Costello, a hired killer, fulfils a contract by killing the proprietor of a nightclub. He is seen coming out of the dead man's office by Valerie, the club's pianist; but when he is arrested on suspicion, she deliberately fails to pick him out of the identity parade. Unable to shake his alibi, the police inspector in charge of the case is forced to release him, though convinced that he is guilty. Shaking off his police tail after a chase through the Metro, Jef goes to the payoff rendezvous, but is met and wounded by a gunman.

Returning to the nightclub, fascinated by Valerie but still not certain whether she chose not to betray him or whether she was ordered not to, he asks her to put him in touch with his unknown employers. She agrees to try, but does not answer when he telephones for the information. The gunman reappears, this time with the payoff money and – explaining that 'they' thought he had bungled the job when he was arrested – an offer of a new contract. Jef accepts, but forces the gunman to reveal the name and address of the man who is paying for his services.

After killing the man, Olivier Rey, he goes to the nightclub to fulfil his second contract: to kill Valerie. The police are lying in wait, and shoot him dead as he aims his gun at her. It turns out his gun was loaded.

Jean-Pierre Melville's cameo appearance as the novelist Parvulesco in Godard's *A Bout de souffle* has probably been the main reason for the popular view of him as precursor of the New Wave and great inscriber of 'Hollywood' into post-war French cinema. Now shown for the first time here in its original version, *Le Samourai* ought almost of itself to give the lie to a misperception grounded in the general unavailability of his work and that of Jacques Becker, whose *Touchez pas au grisbi* clearly marks the beginning of the French *série noire* genre. *Le Samourai*, like Melville's later *Le Cercle rouge* and *Un Flic* (both shown here only in badly cut and dubbed versions), certainly uses film noir iconography: the snap-brim trilby, the trenchcoat. But its resolutely non-naturalistic use of colour already marks it out as something different, as does a charged absence of dialogue going back to Melville's first feature *Le Silence de la mer* and, like that film, evocative of Bresson.

When Jef is asked by Valerie, "What kind of man are you?" and responds with silence (as when the Inspector says of him "He is not a normal man"), then we are much closer to the world of *Pickpocket* than to that of *A bout de souffle* – to a world, that is, where the elusiveness of essence is articulated through the refusal of psychology. Character and plot all but disappear here into a hieratic universe in which the narrative impulsion is often provided instead by eye contact – at the beginning, when the eyes of Jef at the wheel of his car meet those of a mysterious blonde (prefiguring *American Graffiti*, perhaps?), and most memorably during the protracted sequence of the identity parade, which foregrounds at once the importance of identity and its paradoxical emptiness (we know nothing of the parade of suspects beyond the fact that Jef is the man being looked for).

The use of verbal language is frequently telling – as with Valerie's shift from using the *vous* to the *tu* form with Jef, the first indication of their changed relationship. It is also ironically apposite. Jef – a gangster presumably mad, bad and dangerous to know – lives in the rue Lord Byron, where a flashing neon sign advertising the *Pari's Hotel* is less an early case of green-grocer's apostrophe than a sardonic Pascalian allusion (*pari* in French meaning 'bet').

The centre on which all these half-silences and ambiguities bear is the bruised yet hardened countenance of Alain Delon in his finest performance. His Jef is a worthy ephebic rival to *Brighton Rock's* Pinky, and his empty gun-chamber in the final shot may speak of more types of vulnerability than one.

Keith Reader

TV FILM

The Last Bolshevik

France/UK/Finland 1993

Director: Chris Marker

Distributor

Channel 4

Production Companies

Les Films de l'Astrophore (Paris)/Michael Kustow Productions (London)/Epidem Oy (Helsinki)/For La Sept/Channel Four/YLE With financial assistance from the Finnish Film Fund/Le Centre National du Cinéma

Producer

Michael Kustow

Production Co-ordinator

Françoise Widhoff

Memory Manager

Julia Bodin

Screenplay

Chris Marker

Photography

Chris Marker

In colour

Editor

Chris Marker

Music

Alfred Schnittke

Additional:

Michel Krasna

Music Extracts

Modest Mussorgsky

Sergei Rachmaninov

D & D Porras

Vyacheslav Artyomov

Arthur Honegger

Antonio Vivaldi

Moondog

English version

Orna Kustow

Michael Kustow

With

Leonor Graser

Dinosaur Girl

Nikolai Izvolov

Kira Paramonova

Viktor Diomen

Yuli Raizman

Marina Kalasieva

Chongara Medvedkina

Lev Rochal

Vladimir Dimitriev

Antonina Pirojkova

Albert Schulte

Rhona Campbell

Marina Goldovskaya

Yakov Tolchan

Sofia Prituliak

Yuri Kolyada

Interviewees

Michael Pennington

Voice

(at 25 fps)

116 minutes

Partly Subtitled

English version

French Title:

Le Tombeau d'Alexandre

The life of Soviet film director Alexander Medvedkin is investigated through six 'letters' to him, each combining film and documentary material, interviews with those who remember him and evidence drawn from parallel Soviet lives.

Part One: *A Kingdom of Shadows*. The First Letter traces Medvedkin's life to 1921, his peasant roots illuminated by allusion to *Happiness*. During the Civil War Medvedkin, like Isaac Babel, served in General Budenny's Red Cavalry, and Babel's writings and subsequent experience are summoned in evidence. The Second Letter follows Medvedkin from staging propaganda plays for the Soviet army to the military film studios. His later film experiments are compared with those of Meyerhold, and the beginnings of the agit-trains with the work of Vertov. The Third Letter examines Medvedkin's project to "take the film studio to the people" in his 30s film trains. The scores of films he made were all presumed lost, but the Moscow film scholar Nikolai Izvolov has recently rediscovered nine of them. Extracts reveal their role as precursors of *Happiness*.

Part Two: *Shadows of a Kingdom*. In the Fourth Letter the shadows darken as Stalin's presence looms over Soviet cinematography. The quintessential 30s movies, suggests Marker, are the



The system and its statuary

footage of the show trials, with their own scripts and actors – even, in Vyshinsky, their own star. The Fifth Letter begins with the Nazi-Soviet pact, and war footage. Then Marker cuts to Medvedkin's death in 1989 and wonders how to end his film, discarding Russian lyricism in favour of shots of the failed coup of 1991 and Moscow food queues in 1992.

The Last Letter returns in search of Medvedkin with his colour footage of the 1939 May Day parade, and pauses briefly over his late features and documentaries. Marker recalls the heady days of showing *Happiness* in the West. The film ends with cinematographer Yakov Tolchan admitting that now he believes only in music.

The *Last Bolshevik* opens with George Steiner's contention that it is not the literal past that holds us in thrall but images of the past. Alexander Medvedkin was a prolific provider of such images, and much of Chris Marker's film examines the Soviet state's dealing in images, from the 1920 street theatre re-enactment of the storming of the Winter Palace, through Eisenstein's creation of history in *The Battleship Potemkin* and *October*, to the deconstruction not just of the system but of its statuary and other visual signs in 1991. However, Medvedkin's film-train contributions to the imagining of the regime are revealed, in the footage discovered by Nikolai Izvolov, to be troubling and ambiguous.

Medvedkin was born with the century in 1900 and just predeceased the Soviet Union in 1989. Marker is understandably tempted to see the state as the director's double and systematic doubling is his main cognitive stragem. Babel plays the role in the Red Cavalry and Meyerhold in the radical theatrical experiments of the 20s; Dziga Vertov's documentaries, Dovzhenko's film elegies to peasants and horses, Eisenstein's treatment of collectivisation in *Bezhin Meadow*, Roman Karmen's war footage offer further paral-

els. The veteran director Yuli Raizman and the cinematographer Yakov Tolchan, both Medvedkin's contemporaries, survive to offer their lives and experience as models of his. Ivan Pvr'ev serves as a dark doppelganger, his 1950 fairytale of peasant life *Kuban Cossacks* an exemplar of art produced in service of the state.

Marker is right to draw interpretative threads between these men; but perhaps in consequence, perhaps as cause, Medvedkin himself remains elusive. Most of Medvedkin's later life remains, in current Russian parlance, a "blank spot". Though he made the majority of his features and documentary films in the post-Stalin period, they are only fleetingly glimpsed in *The Last Bolshevik*, a decision no doubt provoked by their queasy orthodoxy. Stalin died in 1953, almost exactly at the middle of the Soviet epoch. At present, however, the whole second half of the period risks turning into one huge blank spot, overlooked, as here, in favour of examination of the first. It is easy to see why the 20s, and especially the 30s, are attractive to researchers. The glamour of their constructive drive, and the tragic grandeur of their delusions, are simpler to pin down and interpret than the thwarted elation of the Thaw and the drab conformity of Brezhnevism.

What was Medvedkin thinking when he made his conventional anti-Maoist diatribes in the 60s? Medvedkin himself, in his rare interviews, wasn't saying. *The Last Bolshevik* marshals several perceptive commentators in its attempt to understand the man. Marina Goldovskaia, director of the documentary *Solovki Power*, thinks that Medvedkin and Vertov had too much feeling and not enough brain. Nikolai Izvolov thinks Medvedkin remained forever a man of the 20s. For Marker, as the catchy but quite inappropriate title of this absorbing film fails to conceal, his hero remains something of an enigma.

Julian Gaffey

OVERVIEW

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and Peter Dean new retail videos

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Bram Stoker's Dracula

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 14590

Certificate 18 Director Francis Ford Coppola This frenzied adaption of the seminal vampire tale owes more to Coppola's sensibilities than to Stoker. Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder and Anthony Hopkins lead an impressive cast which is let down by Keanu Reeves' hammy performance. A visual feast with thematic depths. (S&S January 1993) □

Consenting Adults

USA 1992/Buena Vista D915232

Certificate 15 Director Alan J. Pakula It's suburban wife-swapping à gogo in Pakula's limp examination of modern mores which transforms into a clumsy murder mystery. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife" runs the tagline. (S&S March 1993)

The End of the Golden Weather

New Zealand 1992/Hi Fliers HFV 8242

Certificate PG Director Ian Mune A whimsical childhood drama which garnered international acclaim. A 12-year-old boy encounters Firpo, a magical character who convinces him of the reality of miracles. (S&S February 1993)

Hoffa

USA 1992/Guild G8704

Certificate 15 Director Danny DeVito An ambitious but dull tribute to renegade Hollywood union leader Jimmy Hoffa. Jack Nicholson gives a worthy performance and DeVito's direction is competent, but David Mamet's jumbled screenplay leaves a lot to be desired. (S&S April 1993) □

Honey, I Blew Up the Kid

USA 1992/Disney DLL 43712

Certificate U Director Randal Kleiser An unimaginative sequel to the passable *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. The poor special

effects and grating performances show up Kleiser's lack of talent. (S&S February 1993)

Leap of Faith

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2742

Certificate PG Director Richard Pearce Steve Martin takes a dive in this self-indulgent and smug exposé of the evangelical business. Martin's performance is laboured and Liam Neeson's American accent is terrible. (S&S April 1993)

Leon the Pig Farmer

UK 1992/Electric Pictures EP 0029

Certificate 15 Directors Vadim Jean, Gary Sinyor That rarest of things – a successful British comedy. North London Jewish boy Leon Geller discovers that his biological father is a Yorkshire pig farmer (Brian Glover) and embarks on a mission of cultural cross-fertilisation. Genuinely funny. (S&S March 1993)

One False Move

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 13517

Certificate 18 Director Carl Franklin After a particularly horrific opening, Franklin's intelligent thriller settles into its stride becoming an understated, interracial suspense-mystery. An African-American woman brings destruction and intrigue when she returns to her Arkansas home town. Fine performances and superb direction make this unmissable. (S&S April 1993)

Simple Men

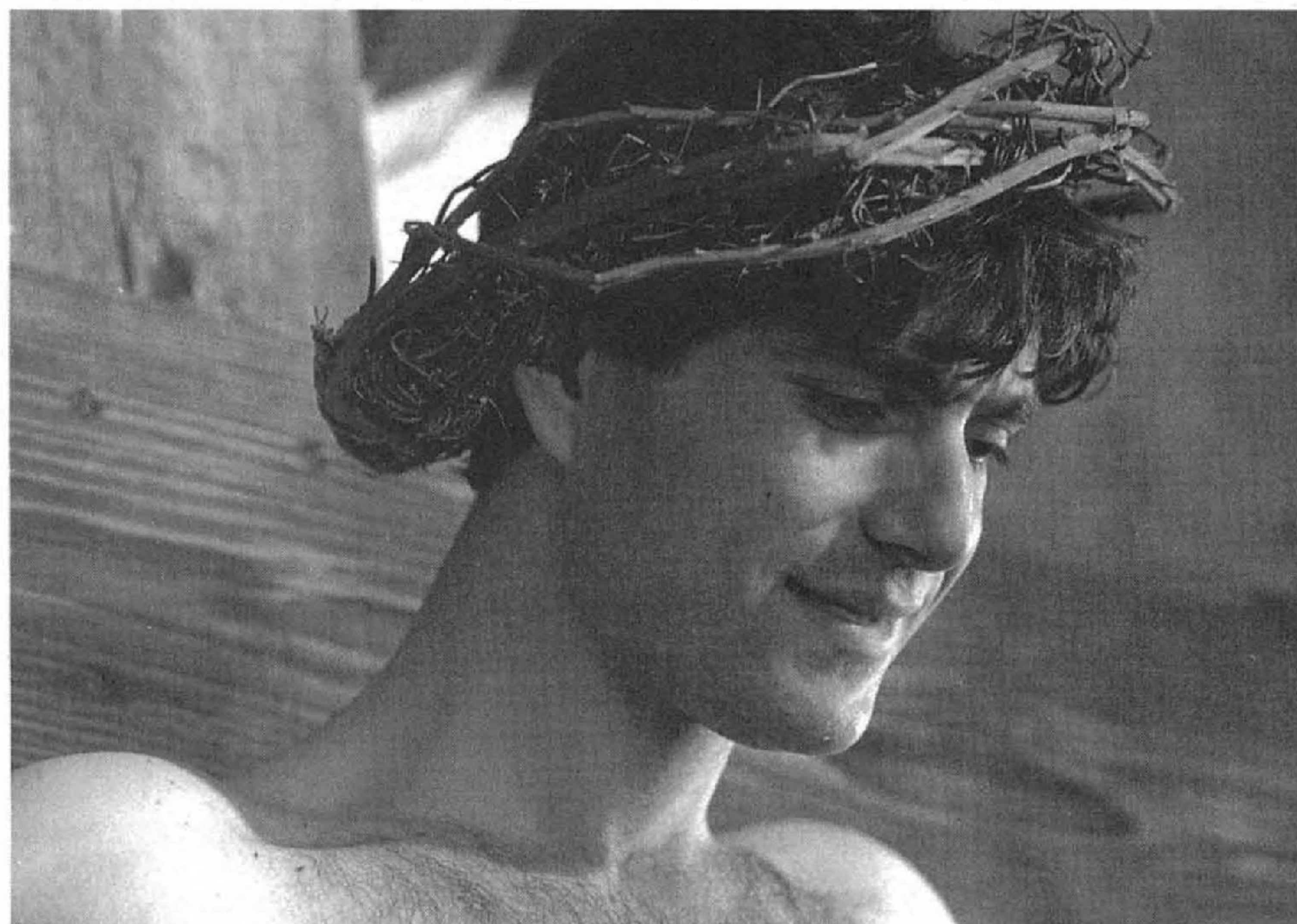
UK/USA 1992/Tartan Video TVT 1023

Certificate 15 Director Hal Hartley Although the weakest of Hartley's films, this affectionate portrait of two young men in search of their ex-radical father still contains much that is witty, incisive and moving. Robert Burke is excellent. (S&S December 1992)

Unforgiven

USA 1993/Warner VO 12531

Certificate 15 Director Clint Eastwood Eastwood deservedly won Best Director Oscar for this nihilistic Western which retains its power on the small screen. Gene Hackman, Morgan Freeman and Richard Harris offer solid support while Eastwood's portrayal of an ex-gunslinger's (failed) search for redemption is marvellous. (S&S October 1992) □



Kosher comedy: 'Leon the Pig Farmer'

Rental premiere

Ambush in Waco: In the Line of Duty

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 362

Certificate 15 Director/Producer Dick Lowry Screenplay Phil Penningroth Lead Actors Timothy Daly, Dan Lauria 89 minutes The film's inclusion of newsreel footage of the FBI's disastrous attack upon David Koresh's asylum confirms the tasteless nature of this true-life TV movie.

Dracula Rising

USA 1993/CIC Video VHA 1642

Certificate 18 Director Fred Gallo Producer Roger Corman Screenplay Rodman Flender, Daniella Purcell Lead Actors Christopher Atkins, Stacey Travis, Doug Wert 77 minutes Described by Corman as "More the half brother of *Frankenstein Unbound* than the bastard son of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*", this camp horror update does little to restore faith in Corman's flagging career. An art historian is enchanted by a mysterious but elusive man.

Fatal Proposal

USA 1993/20.20 Vision NVT 20720

Certificate 18 Director Michael Switzer Producers Joel Fields, Leonard Hill Screenplay Frank Abatemarco Lead Actors Richard Thomas, Brooke Shields, Viveka Davis, William Allen Young 114 minutes Perfunctory made-for-TV thriller about a woman newscaster who, after being the first on the scene of a multiple murder, finds herself being stalked by the killer.

Golddigger

USA 1993/20.20 Vision NVT 20050

Certificate PG Directors/Producers Mark Richardson, Jack Schaoul Screenplay Jack Schaoul Lead Actors Joe Pantoliano, John Rhys-Davies, Danny Gerard, Amy Wright 100 minutes Amiable inventor Jack creates a gold-digging robot to track down valuable treasure in this innocuous comedy.

Hidden Obsession

USA 1992/Guild G8718

Certificate 18 Director John Stewart Producer Tom Broadbridge Screenplay David Reskin Lead Actors Jan Michael Vincent, Heather Thomas, Nick Celozzi 91 minutes A TV reporter (Thomas) tormented by anonymous phone calls finds comfort in the arms of a policeman (Vincent). Made-for-TV thriller.

Highway to Hell

USA 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 12124

Certificate 15 Director Ate de Jong Producers Mary Anne Page, John Byers Screenplay Brian Helgeland Lead Actors Chad Lowe, Kristy Swanson, Patrick Bergin, Adam Storke 94 minutes In this terrific comic fantasy a young man ends up searching for his abducted girlfriend in hell. Incidental sight gags fill the screen and Helgeland's dialogue is thigh-slappingly funny. Excellent set design, make-up effects and performance by Patrick Bergin as Old Nick.

House of Cards

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20194

Certificate 15 Director Michael Lessaia

Ben Thompson looks at the revival of the 70s sitcom on video

Crumpets and flares

What was the most regular and thriving area of British film production in the 70s? Not the *Carry Ons*' last gasps, nor the *Confessions* series (... of a Window Cleaner/ Driving Instructor/Pop Performer), but the sitcom spin-off. From *Porridge* to *Bless This House*, most British TV comedy series worth their salt, and many that weren't, faced ritual elongation. The question of what happened when characters and settings which often felt the strain over half an hour were stretched to three times that length is an interesting one – limitations are the lifeblood of the sitcom whereas film breathes through possibility, so the interbreeding of the two is a perilous business. The coming to video of the cinema adaptations of *The Likely Lads*, *Man About the House* and *Are You Being Served?* (released on Warner Home Video) raises another question. The commodification of television past is part and parcel of video culture, but why take this opportunity to watch feature-length versions of programmes that, younger and wiser, you might have spent the best part of the 70s trying to avoid?

Are You Being Served?, made in 1977, offers a disturbing relief map of Britain's psychological landscape in a big year in its cultural history. Both the shocking vulgarity of the Jubilee and the warped patriotism of the Sex Pistols are here in plenty. Within the first minute or so of this department store farce, Mrs Slocombe has revealed her Union Jack underwear and professed concern as to the state of her pussy, Mr Peacock has raised his eyebrows a lot and the evil caretaker Mr Harman has sucked off Shirley's drawers with a Hoover. From then on it's downhill all the way.

Baby boomer nostalgia

It is much easier to be nostalgic about all this if you haven't actually watched it recently. "This is the kind of thing that made Britain great – stupid, but great," opines Mr Grainger, as the Grace Brothers staff, holidaying on the Costa Plonka, take shelter in the midst of an unlikely Spanish *coup d'état*. It is hard to believe this line was written at the time, not inserted subsequently, so perfectly does it sum up what might be called the Jonathan Ross defence of we-all-had-this-experience-together-so-it-must-be-worth-repeating baby boomer infantilism, which is the one most likely to be fallen back on by champions of the *Are You Being Served?* experience. The end-of-the-pier tradition of homely vaudeville sauce to which Grace Brothers belongs has been elevated of late to an exalted position in our culture – an elevation which, in this case at least, is more patronising than the neglect it used to suffer. There is a kind of self-hatred in the eager embrace of mediocrity which characterises so much contemporary nostalgia. The spiritual impoverishment on show in *Are You Being Served?* makes you worry for a decade that could have found pleasure in it, but even more for one that would want to watch it again.

Man About the House starts from what was at the time (1974) still apparently



The saucy 70s: Wendy Richard and Mollie Sugden in 'Are You Being Served?'

a nudge-nudge premise – lusty 'young' student Richard O'Sullivan finds himself in the ultimately desirable position of sharing a flat with two young women, thus enabling him to overcompensate for the perceived threat to masculinity in his choice of vocation (catering) by tethering their every thought and deed to his libido. To this rather bland concoction, the innate sparkiness of Paula Wilcox's Chrissy and the raw domestic savagery of landlords George and Mildred ("These cigarettes are going to be the death of you. Have another one.") add much-needed spice.

After *Are You Being Served?*, with its nightmarish netherworld of cardboard sets and mad backing muzak, the production values of *Man About the House* are of Merchant/Ivory standard. The setting of Myddleton Terrace, NW8, might not be a real place, but at least it looks like one. The story supplies the extra gravitas needed to justify a big-screen treatment by way of a threat to this environment from an unscrupulous property developer. John Mortimer and Brian Cooke's screenplay has a mild socialistic tinge to it. But the warm glow of gentle banter and familiar faces (Spike Milligan, the two Bills, Maynard and Pertwee, and Johnny "Mike Baldwin" Briggs) is chilled by two glimpses of the racial exclusion zone around that 'ordinariness'. Two black characters flit across the screen: a harassed mother who is there only for a cheap laugh at her child being called Enoch (thank goodness they never made a film of *Mind Your Language*) and a now-forgotten Thames television celebrity called "Sambo the Nig-Nog". Chrissy's lament "You can do anything in London except live!" might have been designed for such marginalised figures.

Community breakdown

The theme of the destruction of community gets more in-depth treatment in the 1976 film *The Likely Lads* (despite the return to the original title, this is actually a spin-off of the later and in many ways more interesting *Whatever*

Happened to the Likely Lads?). The action begins with the slum clearance of the street and the pub, The Fat Ox, where the lads grew up. Rodney Bewes' Bob, who has long since moved on to the luxury of the Elm Lodge housing estate, waxes lyrical about its virtues, while James Bolam's socially immobile Terry looks forward to a "modern kitchen, a lovely view and an inside toilet" in his new high-rise flat. Unfortunately, these hoped-for amenities can be experienced only in the context of social breakdown, as lifts fail and children run riot in unfamiliar concrete surroundings.

Dick Clements and Ian La Frenais' story flirts dangerously with proper film status. It can even afford a framing device: "England 1943, the tide of war has turned... somewhere in war-torn Britain Mrs Edith Collier capitulates to the advances of her husband." Much of the comedy which follows is built around this vision of male and female sexuality – the former predatory, the latter surrendering – but this dubious ideal, which maritally becalmed Rodney Bewes looks to James Bolam's Jack-the-Lad to act out, is often undermined. Not just because a secret flame burns between lone wolf Terry and Bob's constricting wife Thelma (who "could have gone to Morocco with UNICEF" had she not married when she did), but also because her forever-yearning-for-freedom husband is never happier than when, temporarily estranged from his lawful mate, he gets to prepare a meal for his mannish buddy.

Bob and Terry's unrequitable romance comes the closest of this spin-off trio to satisfying film's need for closure without compromising sitcom's continuity. Even their tender misadventures reinforce the unfashionable idea that it might be better to live in the present than in the past. There are three aspects of mid-70s Britishness here – a proud regionalism, a gently shifting suburban equilibrium and a stagnant seaside postcard. The only thing that unites them is a misguided belief in the comic potential of the word 'crumpet'.

Producers Dale Pollock, Lianne Halfon, Wolfgang Glattes Screenplay Michael Lessaie Lead Actors Kathleen Turner, Tommy Lee Jones, Park Overall, Ashia Menina 109 minutes A mother rejects advice in an attempt to reach her daughter after the death of the child's father causes the girl to become withdrawn.

Jennifer 8

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2748 Certificate 15 Director Bruce Robinson Producers Gary Lucchesi, David Wimbury Screenplay Bruce Robinson Lead Actors Andy Garcia, Uma Thurman, Lance Henriksen, Kathy Baker, John Malkovich 120 minutes Although initially menacing, Robinson's addition to the serial killer genre falls back on clichés. A burnt-out cop (Garcia) believes that a blind waif (Thurman) could be the key to a series of murders. Atmospheric photography by Conrad Hall and a sumptuous score by Christopher Young fail to lift the film.

Judgment Day

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 390 Certificate 15 Director Bobby Roth Producer Dan Howard Screenplay Dennis Turner Lead Actors Robert Blake, Beverly D'Angelo 93 minutes True-life drama based on the life of a devoted Christian who murdered his family in order to ensure their passage to heaven.

Keeper of the City

USA 1991/FoxVideo 4025 Certificate 15 Director Bobby Roth Producers Bill McCutchen, Paul Kurta Screenplay Gerald Dipego Lead Actors Louis Gossett Jr, Anthony LaPaglia, Peter Coyote 91 minutes Roth finds his feet with this effective thriller, aided and abetted by an impressive cast. With the help of a tabloid journalist a disturbed vigilante wins mass support in his fight against the Mafia. Lou Gossett Jr has to bring the deranged public hero to justice.

Kiss and Be Killed

USA 1991/CIC Video VHA 1596 Certificate 18 Director Tom E. Milo Producer Uncredited Screenplay Craig Shapiro, Lawrence Folgo, Tom E. Milo Lead Actors Caroline Ludvik, Crystal Carson, Tom Reilly, Ken Norton, Jimmy Baio 82 minutes This dismal thriller is a classic example of a made-on-the-cheap straight-to-video movie. The opening credits contain five howling continuity errors and the ensuing murder mystery plods along.

Knife Edge

USA 1991/Hi Fliers HFV 8240 Certificate 15 Director Kurt Voss Producer Larry Ratner Screenplay Kurt Voss, Larry Ratner Lead Actors Brad Dourif, Sammi Davis, M.K. Harris, Max Perlich 91 minutes Brad Dourif steals the show in this feisty independent offering. A kinky couple (Davis, Harris) meet their match after choosing misfit Dourif as a third party in their games. Psychotic thrills ensue.

Legacy of Rage

Hong Kong (Year unknown)/Imperial Entertainment IMP 129 Certificate 18 Director Ronny Yu

Producers John Sham, Linda Kuk *Screenplay* Ronny Yu *Lead Actors* Brandon Lee, Michael Wong, Regina Kent, Onno Boelee *82 minutes*
An efficiently directed early ‘chop socky’ movie dubbed from Chinese and featuring the recently deceased Brandon Lee. Brandon swears revenge when released after being framed for the murder of a policeman. Bolo Yeung is credited as Onno Boelee.

Mom and Dad Save the World

USA 1991/First Independent VA 20191
Certificate PG *Director* Greg Beeman
Producer Michael Phillips *Screenplay* Chris Matheson, Ed Solomon *Lead Actors* Teri Garr, Jeffrey Jones, Jon Lovitz, Wallace Shawn *87 minutes*
Matheson and Solomon (creators of *Bill and Ted*) deliver the goods in this goofy but uneven comic fantasy. Beeman's direction is sloppy but Garr is engaging as the suburban housewife kidnapped and coveted by extraterrestrial emperor Tod Spengor.

Mortal Sins

USA 1992/Braveworld VO 90550
Certificate 15 *Director* Bradford May
Producer Tom Rowe *Screenplay* Greg Martinelli, Dennis Paolo *Lead Actors* Christopher Reeve, Roxann Biggs, Francis Guinan, Weston McMillan *88 minutes*
A serial killer confesses his crimes to his priest (Reeve) who is wrongly suspected of the murders. Unable to repeat the confession, Father Cusack resolves to catch the killer himself.

Munchie

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1644
Certificate PG *Director* Jim Wynorski
Producer Mike Elliott *Screenplay* R.J. Robertson, Jim Wynorski *Lead Actors* Loni Anderson, Andrew Stevens, Jamie McEnnan, Dom DeLuise *78 minutes*
Sadly this cute kids' comedy, which executive producer Corman described as “A bit of a change of direction”, bodes ill both for CIC's Corman Collection and for the Corman stable. A child learns the secrets of life from a plastic troll.

A Murderous Affair

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 355
Certificate 15 *Director* Martin Davidson
Executive Producers Steve White, Janet Faust Krusi, Michael Jaffe
Screenplay Earl Wallace, Pamela Wallace, Martin Davidson *Lead Actors* Virginia Madsen, Chris Sarandon, Ned Eisenberg *89 minutes*
Nothing much to write home about in this true-life TV movie except the presence of Virginia Madsen. Sarandon is suspected of murdering his wife until the evidence starts to point to his alluring lover (Madsen).

Prehysteria

USA 1993/CIC Video VHB 2783
Certificate PG *Directors* Charles Band, Albert Band *Producer* Charles Band
Screenplay Greg Suddeth, Mark Goldstein *Lead Actors* Brett Cullen, Austin O'Brien, Collen Morris, Samantha Mills, Stephen Lee *81 minutes*
Youthful star O'Brien leads this surprisingly serviceable *Jurassic Park* spin-off. Pygmy dinosaur eggs hatch in the basement of a family home with lovable results. Passable special effects and an

innocuous script make this ideal for people too young (or sensitive) to endure Spielberg's rampaging creature-feature.

Radio Flyer

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 12595
Certificate PG *Director* Richard Donner
Producer Lauren Shuler-Donner *Screenplay* David Mickey Evans *Lead Actors* Lorraine Bracco, John Heard, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazzello *110 minutes*
A brave and imaginative movie. Two young children abused by their boorish stepfather retreat into a fantasy world via a ramshackle flying machine. Evans' intelligent script combined with moving performances create a captivating and heartbreaking tale.

Round Trip to Heaven

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 20690
Certificate 15 *Director* Alan Roberts
Producers Ronnie Hadar *Screenplay* Shuki Levy, Winston Richard *Lead Actors* Corey Feldman, Zach Galligan, Julia McCullough, Rowanne Brewer *93 minutes*
Two loathsome teenagers head for Palm Springs in search of a contender in a top model competition. Everyone falls for their reptilian charms and both learn lessons in love. Notable only for Ray Sharkey's endearing ‘beleaguered cabbie’ routine.

The Sea Wolf

USA 1993/First Independent VA 20193
Certificate PG *Director* Michael Anderson
Producers W. Paterson Ferns, Duke Fenady
Screenplay Andrew J. Fenady, based on the novel by Jack London *Lead Actors* Charles Bronson, Christopher Reeve, Catherine Mary Stewart, Len Cariou *89 minutes*
This tale of a shipwrecked aristocrat's torment at the hands of his rescuer is faithful to its literary origins but visually unremarkable.

Shattered Silence

USA 1992/Imperial Entertainment IMP 126
Certificate 15 *Director* Linda Otto
Producer Kay Hoffman *Screenplay* Lucretia Baxter, Alan Landsburg
Lead Actors Bonnie Bedelia, Rip Torn, Patricia Neal *92 minutes*
In this affecting true-life TV trauma movie Bonnie Bedelia turns in a sterling performance as Dr Elizabeth Morgan, a mother who takes her daughter into hiding to save her from an abusive father.

Silent Victim

USA 1992/Hi Fliers HFV 8241
Certificate 18 *Director* Bradley Battersby
Producer David Andrew Peters *Screenplay* Arthur Collis, Brian Battersby *Lead Actors* D.B. Sweeney, Courtney Cox, Craig Sheffer *93 minutes*
Enjoyable plot twists abound in this engaging thriller about a young woman who seems to attract abuse. Courtney Cox in the lead role carries the piece.

Time Runner

Canada 1993/Medusa MO 396
Certificate 15 *Director* Michael Mazo
Producer John A. Curtis *Screenplay* Uncredited *Lead Actors* Mark Hamill, Brion James, Rae Dawn Chong *92 minutes*
A sprightly sci-fi thriller which retains a certain charm despite the fact that the

plot is stolen from *The Terminator*. A hero from a violent future travels back in time to the present day where he attempts to pre-empt an alien invasion.

Unfaithful

USA 1992/Guild G8720
Certificate 15 *Director* Steven Schachter
Producer Carroll Newman *Screenplay* Peter Nelson, based on the novel by Robert Anderson *Lead Actors* Tom Skerritt, Blythe Danner, Roma Downey, Julianne Phillips *89 minutes*
A plodding TV drama about a man in the grips of a mid-life crisis who decides to play the field (with his wife's blessing) but discovers that the rules have changed since his youth.

Retail

The Abyss: Special Edition

USA 1989/FoxVideo WS 1988 Price £12.99/
Widescreen
Certificate 15 *Director* James Cameron
The extra 28 minutes in Cameron's underwater thriller turns the supernatural conclusion into a proper sequence. The aliens watch humans through TV images and threaten the world's coastline with a huge tidal wave, the latter in particular paying lip-service to the film's B movie origins. (S&S August 1993)

Annabelle Partagée

France 1990/Tartan Video TVT 1084 Price £15.99/Widescreen
Certificate 18
Director Francesca Comencini
An aspiring dancer's affair with a friend of her father's ends when she falls in love with a mysterious man. They begin an intense relationship of love-making and dreary pondering on the meaning of life. *Subtitles* (S&S March 1993)

Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter

USA 1990/ EV EVS 1112 Price £10.99
Certificate 15 *Director* Jon Amiel (S&S October 1991)

The Battle of Algiers (La Battaglia di Algeri)

Algeria/Italy 1965/Tartan Video TVT 1085 Price £15.99/Widescreen
Certificate 18 *Director* Gillo Pontecorvo
Masterful pseudo-documentary that catalogues the fight for Algerian independence from the guerrillas' and the French point of view. The aftermath of a bombing in the Casbah, orchestrated by Ennio Morricone's haunting score, remains one of the most powerful sequences in modern cinema. *B/W Subtitles* (MFB No. 447)

La Bête humaine

France 1938/Electric Pictures EP 0030 Price £15.99
Certificate PG *Director* Jean Renoir
Faithful adaptation of the Zola novel with Jean Gabin as a train driver who falls in love with Simone Simon and plots to kill her husband. *B/W Subtitles* (MFB No. 687)

The Bitter Tea of General Yen

USA 1932/Columbia TriStar CVR 13242 Price £9.99
Certificate PG *Director* Frank Capra

Barbara Stanwyck arrives in Shanghai to marry her missionary sweetheart and ignites the passions of a Chinese general. *B/W* (MFB No. 482)

Children of the Corn II: The Final Sacrifice

USA 1992/VCI VC 3426 Price £10.99
Certificate 18 *Director* David F. Price (S&S Video January 1993)

Company Business

USA 1991/MGM/UA SO 54240 Price £10.99
Certificate 15 *Director* Nicholas Meyer (S&S Video September 1992)

Crossing Delancey

USA 1988/Warner SO 11826 Price £8.99
Certificate 15 *Director* Joan Micklin Silver
A beautifully played, sharp-witted comic drama. Amy Irving stars as an attractive single thirtysomething who tries to find a man in New York. Her choices are between a pretentious novelist and a pickle-maker. (MFB No. 482)

Defending Your Life

USA 1991/Warner SO 12049 Price £8.99
Certificate 15 *Director* Albert Brooks
Ad executive Albert Brooks' affair with Meryl Streep in the nether world of Judgment City turns into a matter of life or death in this smart but flat comedy. (S&S August 1991)

Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead

USA 1991/First Independent VA 30292 Price £10.99
Certificate 15 *Director* Stephen Herek (S&S June 1992)

Dr. Mabuse the Gambler (Dr. Mabuse der Spieler)

Germany 1922/Tartan Video TVT 1089 Price £15.99
Certificate 18 *Director* Fritz Lang
Unfortunately not the 265-minute version but just 86 minutes of Lang's silent classic. Dr. Mabuse makes a killing on the stock market and in a rigged gaming club. *B/W Subtitles* (MFB No. 484)

Emperor of the North

USA 1973/FoxVideo WC 1166 Price £10.99
Certificate 15 *Director* Robert Aldrich
Lee Marvin plays a hobo who hitches a ride on a train run by a sadistic conductor (Ernest Borgnine) with a reputation for killing non-fare paying customers. (MFB No. 476)

Excessive Force

USA 1992/EV EVS 1099 Price £10.99
Certificate 18 *Director* Jon Hess (S&S Video March 1993)

F.I.S.T.

USA 1978/MGM/UA SO 50337 Price £8.99
Certificate PG *Director* Norman Jewison
Sylvester Stallone stars in this leaden, clichéd drama about the Federation of Interstate Truckers. Sly reaches the top by pushing union chief Peter Boyle out of the way and then has to face tough senator Rod Steiger. (MFB No. 536)

Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare

USA 1991/PolyGram GLD 51317 Price £10.99
Certificate 18 *Director* Rachel Talalay (S&S February 1992)

Freejack

USA 1992/Warner SO 12328 Price £10.99
Certificate 15 *Director* Geoff Murphy (S&S May 1992)



French 30s film icon Jean Gabin on the run in 'Pépé le moko'

Here Comes Mr. Jordan

USA 1941/Columbia TriStar CVR 10257
Price £9.99

Certificate U Director Alexander Hall
Heavenly administrators call up boxer Joe Pendleton (Robert Montgomery) before his time and then have to try and set things straight in this first-rate fantasy.
B/W (MFB No. 95)

The Hitman

USA 1991/Cannon SO 32036 Price £10.99
Certificate 18 Director Aaron Norris
(S&S Video July 1992)

The Honeymoon Killers

USA 1969/Tartan Video TVT 1087
Price £15.99/Widescreen
Certificate 18 Director Leonard Kastle
Tony Lo Bianco and Shirley Stoler are brilliant as a psychotic couple who steal from and eventually murder lonely hearts. Kastle's straightforward, stark and technically uneven cult piece is based on a murder case of the late 40s.
B/W (MFB No. 436)

Human Experiments

New Zealand/Australia 1981/
VIPCO VIP 045 Price £12.99
Certificate 18 Director Michael Laughlin

Spooky offbeat horror in which the police chief of Galesburg, Illinois (Michael Murphy) finds himself investigating unexplained murders.
Aka *Dead Kids* (MFB No. 556)

Lost Horizon

USA 1937/Columbia TriStar CVR 10286
Price £9.99

Certificate U Director Frank Capra
Late 30s classic about a group of disparate people who survive an air crash and stumble on the strange land of Shangri-La. This version was restored in 1986 to its original length of 132 minutes.
B/W (MFB No. 40)

M

Germany 1931/Redemption RETN 011
Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Fritz Lang
Stylish Lang film about a child murderer who creates mass panic in Berlin.
100 minutes B/W Subtitles
(S&S Video October 1992)

Mister Johnson

USA 1990/Warner SO 35234 Price £10.99
Certificate 15 Director Bruce Beresford
Maynard Eziashi gives a shining performance as the eponymous Anglophile clerk in this moving drama

about the impact of a new road on a West African village. (S&S June 1991)

**Night of the Bloody Apes
(La Horripilante bestia humana)**

Mexico 1968/VIPCO VIP 047 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director René Cardona
A doctor revives his son with a heart transplant from a gorilla. (MFB No. 491)

Nosferatu

(Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens)

Germany 1921/Redemption RETN 012
Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director F.W. Murnau
The first and arguably most eerie screen adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. This is a far better quality print than the disastrous version available last year.
47 minutes B/W Silent (MFB No. 481)

Notorious

USA 1991/PolyGram GLD 51302
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Colin Bucksey
(S&S Video August 1992)

The Omega Man

USA 1971/Blue Dolphin/
Tartan Video BDV 12654 Price £15.99
Certificate PG Director Boris Sagal
Charlton Heston is the survivor of a

worldwide plague set off by a missile war in this loose adaptation of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*. Anthony Zerbe leads the light-sensitive mutant beings who hide by day and rampage by night.
(MFB No. 458)

Past Midnight

USA 1991/PolyGram GLD 51322
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jan Eliasberg
(S&S Video September 1992)

Pépé le moko

France 1936/Electric Pictures EP 0032
Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Julien Duvivier
Brilliant mix of romance, suspense and humour with Jean Gabin as a loner jewel thief who leaves his beloved Paris for the safety of the Algerian Casbah and then risks all to return for the sake of a woman.
B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 40)

Pyrates

USA 1992/VCI VC 3409 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Noah Stern
(S&S Video February 1993)

Le Quai des brumes

France 1938/Electric Pictures EP 0031
Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Marcel Carné
Quintessential French film noir set in Le Havre. An army deserter (Jean Gabin) falls in love with Michèle Morgan and becomes involved with a violent gang.
B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 687)

Queen Bee

USA 1955/Columbia TriStar CVR 14360
Price £9.99

Certificate PG Director Ranald MacDougall
Claustrophobic, melodramatic star vehicle with Joan Crawford as a wealthy woman who tries to dominate everyone around her.
B/W (MFB No. 263)

Rollerball

USA 1975/MGM/UA SO 50262 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Norman Jewison
Ingenious and influential sci-fi thriller set in the future when the world has been regrouped politically into six conglomerate cartels. To vent human aggression the sport of 'rollerball' is devised with death as one of the penalties. (MFB No. 504)

Rush

USA 1991/MGM/UA SO 52303 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Lili Fini Zanuck
(S&S April 1992)

The Solid Gold Cadillac

USA 1956/Columbia TriStar CVR 10334
Price £9.99

Certificate U Director Richard Quine
A minor shareholder upsets the crooked board of a large corporation in this lightweight comedy starring Judy Holliday.
B/W (MFB No. 273)

Stone Cold

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVR 22861
Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Craig R. Baxley
(S&S September 1992)

The Thomas Crown Affair

USA 1968/MGM/UA SO 51260 Price £8.99
Certificate PG Director Norman Jewison
A millionaire (Steve McQueen) plans a Boston bank robbery so that he can play

cat-and-mouse with a female insurance investigator sent to expose him. Best remembered for the films bold use of split-screen technique and the song "The Windmills of Your Mind". (MFB No. 459)

Through a Glass Darkly (Såsom I En Spegel)

Sweden 1961/Tartan Video TVT 089
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Ingmar Bergman Archetypal angst-ridden Bergman film which charts a mentally ill woman's return to her family over the course of a nightless 24 hours.

B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 348)

Wittgenstein

UK 1993/Connoisseur Video CR 122
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Derek Jarman Jarman's film about philosopher Wittgenstein is imaginative, humorous and visually lush. Co-scripted by Jarman, Terry Eagleton and Ken Butler.

(S&S April 1993)

The World According to Garp

USA 1982/Warner SO 11261 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director George Roy Hill Superior acting – especially from Mary Beth Hurt as Garp's wife and John Lithgow as an ex-footballer turned transexual – helps lift this to something approaching the quirky blend of humour and pathos of John Irving's book.

(MFB No. 589)

Yol (The Way)

Turkey/Switzerland 1982/
Artificial Eye ART 069 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Serif Gören Powerful condemnation of militarism and oppression in Turkey which follows five prisoners on a week's parole. Written by Yilmaz Güney in prison and smuggled out of Turkey to Europe where Güney edited it following his escape.

Subtitles (MFB No. 588)

Retail premiere

Atlantis

France 1991/Warner SO 12409
Price £10.99

Certificate E Director Luc Besson Producer Claude Besson Music Eric Serra 73 minutes It took three years for Besson to make this ode to the ocean. There is no narrative or voice-over, just brilliant sea images accompanied by Serra's score. Visual patterns are captured in a similar style to *Koyaanisqatsi*.

Boys On Film 1: The Dead Boys' Club/Pool Days

USA 1992/Dangerous To Know DTK 006
Price £14.99

The Dead Boys' Club

Director Mark Christopher Producer Mike Muffoletto Screenplay Mark Christopher Lead Actors Nat DeWolf, Erik van der Wilden, Matt Decker, Erik Estrada 25 minutes

Pool Days

Director Brian Sloan Producers Brian Sloan, Robert Miller, Bruce Weber Screenplay Brian Sloan Lead Actors Josh Weinstein, Nick Poletti, Kimberly Flynn, Richard Salamanca 27 minutes These two shorts are the first in a series to be released on the gay label Dangerous To Know. *The Dead Boys' Club* involves a

man who is transported back in time to the pre-Aids New York gay scene. *Pool Days*, which is the better made of the two, is about a teenage pool attendant who becomes aware of his gay sexuality.

Fade to Black

USA 1980/Missing in Action MIA V3373
Price £12.99

Certificate 18

Director Vernon Zimmerman Producers George G. Braunsten, Ron Hamady Screenplay Vernon Zimmerman Lead Actors Dennis Christopher, Tim Thomerson, Gwynne Gilford, Normann Burton 98 minutes Low-budget cult comic-horror with Dennis Christopher playing a movie fan who acts out the fantasies of his favourite movie characters. The film's uncertain tone and limp humour is particularly in evidence during a pastiche of the *Psycho* shower scene.

You'll Never Get Rich

USA 1941/Columbia TriStar CVR 12060
Price £9.99

Certificate U Director Sidney Lanfield Producer Samuel Bischoff Screenplay Michael Fessier, Ernest Pagano Lead Actors Fred Astaire, Rita Hayworth, Robert Benchley, John Hubbard 88 minutes

Fred Astaire plays a musical director who gets drafted but still manages to put on a show and romance Rita Hayworth. B/W

Zombie Nosh

USA 1989/VIPCO VIP 044 Price £12.99

Certificate 18

Director/Producer Bill Hinzman Screenplay Bill Hinzman, Bill Randolph Lead Actors John Mowod, Leslie Ann Wick, Kevin Kindlin, Lisa Smith 88 minutes A group of teenagers become lambs to the slaughter when their picnic site turns out to be the ancient setting for barbaric satanic rituals. Ho-hum schlocker. Aka *Revenge of the Living Zombies/Flesheaters*

Retail Collections

**The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb/
The Revenge of Frankenstein**

UK 1964/1958/Columbia TriStar P178
Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Directors Michael Carreras/Terence Fisher

In *The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb* a mummified pharaoh stalks the streets of Victorian London seeking revenge on his grave robbers. *The Revenge of Frankenstein* was the second of the Hammer *Frankenstein* films, a slow-moving piece in which the doctor resumes his experiments after the death of his monster. (MFB Nos. 396/296)

Torture Garden/Scream and Scream Again

UK 1968/1969/Columbia TriStar P177
Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Directors Freddie Francis/Gordon Hessler

In *Torture Garden* five visitors to a carnival sideshow have their futures told by Dr. Diablo in a genuinely frightening portmanteau. *Scream and Scream Again* stars Vincent Price as a doctor trying to create a superhuman monster. Aka *Screamer* (MFB Nos. 408/434)

WIND UP

By Chris Long

I couldn't put my finger on why, but I'd never found films on television as enjoyable as at the cinema. I know television lacks the popcorn experience, but it was more than that: 'Apocalypse Now' just didn't look half as impressive. In the end, I gave up and didn't bother to watch. Then, in a fit of comfort buying, I rented a widescreen television, with the result of a voyage of discovery to match Columbus' (well in the 'Carry On' version, anyway). I have discovered there is light on the horizon for us couch film enthusiasts, and it's coming through a letterbox near you.

The problem with modern films is the picture shape: it doesn't fit the television screen. This is all down to the picture's width to height (aspect) ratio. Television has an aspect ratio of 4:3, based on the old 'Academy' ratio in which early films were shot (for the technically minded, 4:3 is also sometimes written as 1.33:1). This ratio was the norm for films up to the 50s, when in response to the threat of television the film industry developed the widescreen format. By the 60s three different ratios had emerged: European film-makers plumped for 1.66:1, the US 1.85:1 and finally, big-time widescreen, Cinemascope, for a ratio of 2.35:1.

As you might imagine, the nearly square television screen isn't at all sympathetic to long thin Cinemascope films such as 'Lawrence of Arabia'. So to get around this, the television companies developed a system called pan and scan. Pan and scan picks a 1.33:1 window out of the 2.35:1 or whatever widescreen image, in which, supposedly, all the action takes place. In reality, of course, that's not the case: there's always the odd scene where some bloke is talking to himself for no apparent reason, and it's only later you discover that it was a wide two-shot and somebody had been sitting next to him all the time. Of course, more often than not when the film is transferred these scenes are done by intercutting between the protagonists in two separate windows. Thus the pacing and feel of a scene written, filmed, directed and played as a single shot is wrecked in one fell swoop.

It is not as though you can't show widescreen films on television and simply end up with a long thin picture masked in the unused areas at the top and bottom of the screen by black bars, which gives rise to the term 'letterboxed'. But television companies claim these black bars



Double vision: Bruce Willis in 'Die Hard'

induce nearly tens of people to call up and complain, and it's these complaints they cite as the reason for not showing films on television in their original format.

To find out what you really miss, I did an experiment. I got a panned and scanned video of 'Die Hard', together with its newer widescreen version. I borrowed a second video player, bought a big packet of popcorn and watched both films simultaneously, bouncing between the different versions on the widescreen television. Widescreen television has come about as a result of developments in the new high-definition television (HDTV) systems. HDTV has provision for a 16:9 widescreen format, which is very close to the standard US widescreen ratio of 1.85:1. And the difference between the two films was astonishing and revealing.

Take the scene where the policeman investigates the office block after Bruce Willis' emergency call. On the pan and scan version, he walks past the lifts, sees nothing, loses patience and leaves. But the full frame version shows a gunman waiting for him just around the corner. I may be meticulous, but I can't help but feel that the overall effect of the scene is somewhat diminished by not seeing this, even if it is just losing the opportunity to jump up and down on your seat and shout "Look out!". In other scenes, instead of two characters having a conversation from either side of the screen, we cut between them, with a subsequent distortion of pace. But the most surprising discovery was how claustrophobic the television version appeared in comparison with the widescreen (which, of course, is how it looked to the director through the viewfinder of the camera). Films such as 'Abyss', 'Alien' and 'The King and I' take on a different aspect.

Then I discovered some more numbers. Videos are generally categorised as either 21:9 (which is a rounded-up Cinemascope 2.35:1) or 16:9. For those watching on 16:9 widescreen televisions, some European films like 'Cyrano de Bergerac' lose a little at the top and bottom because of the lower European aspect ratio of 1.66:1. And 21:9 films still have black bars at the top and bottom.

The quality of the videos also isn't always as good as it could be (something more noticeable on earlier releases). Pictures from the video player are made up from around 240 lines, compared to 625 off air. And expanding a thinner picture uses even less lines, so the grain and noise are expanded with it. Still, a well-recorded video (such as 'White Christmas', or the latest widescreen 'Indiana Jones' set) is usually well worth watching.

To rent a widescreen television costs around £50 a month. The screen is two feet wide by 14 inches deep, so the whole thing is pretty big. It was depressing to hear that my Philips 8916 model was discontinued a matter of months after its introduction, to be replaced by a unit that looks exactly the same but sports extra digital wotsits and a new model number: 8762.

The television companies have been slow on the take-up of the letterboxed film. Channel 4 had a brief flirtation with it and then gave up, but recently seems to have got interested again (Channel 4 was responsible for the debacle of panning and scanning the visual masterpiece 'The Last Emperor'). The BBC and ITV companies do very little in this area, and show no sign of changing.

But whatever happens, films on television have come of age. We can finally see what the director, camera operator and actors had in mind when they got together in the first place. And all in the comfort of your own home. Happy viewing.

**Sight
and
Sound**

THE INDEPENDENT YOUNG FILM JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

Sight and Sound and *The Independent* are jointly sponsoring, in association with Apple Computer UK Ltd, a competition to encourage young film writers.

The competition

Entrants are invited to write a 1500 word review of any film released in Britain during October of this year. Among the films scheduled for release are Philip Kaufman's *Rising Sun*, Jane Campion's *The Piano*, Danny Cannon's *The Young Americans*, Ken Loach's *Raining Stones*, Thomas Schlamme's *So I Married an Axe Murderer* and Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colours: Blue*.

The judges will be looking for writing which intelligently conveys the experience of watching the film, shows

a knowledge of film generally and displays an ability to relate the visual language of the film to its content.

The judges are: Tom Sutcliffe, arts editor of *The Independent*; Philip Dodd, editor of *Sight and Sound* and Sheila Johnston, film critic of *The Independent*.

The prize

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How to enter

Send your 1500 word review, together with your name, address and daytime telephone number to: Young Film Journalist of the Year, *Sight and Sound*, 21 Stephen Street, London, W1P 1PL.

Entrants must be aged 25 years or under and resident in the UK. Closing date for receipt of entries is 5 November.

The winner will be announced in *The Independent* on 3 December 1993.



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Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Cheap and cheerless

From Allan Shiach, Chairman, SFC and SFPF

There is both desire and need in Scotland for debate on film and media issues. But Colin McArthur's piece (S&S August), informed as it was by the kind of arthritic thinking which has contributed to the present state of British cinema, is no contribution to that debate. His "dialectics of nationalism" are truly irrelevant in 1993.

McArthur tilts at so many windmills, he exposes himself to the ridicule of those who actually live and work in the film community north of the border. Nobody talks of "Hollywood on the Clyde" except as a joke, Colin. And don't you know that the word "tartan" is OK? It's in rehab these days.

The Scottish Film Production Fund, over the past three years, has supported nearly 80 writers, directors and producers, enabling their projects to be seen, made, advanced or simply improved. McArthur's peculiar scoffing at a board which consists of people of genuine accomplishment and distinction in film-making is motivated not by any objective view of these individuals, but by his dated belief that cheap films are closer to the people and more culturally relevant. His notion that cheaper means better seems to be based on the credo that film is "contaminated" by ugly things like finance, distributors and audiences.

It is no "fantasy" that this board has accomplished and will try to sustain an environment for our writers, producers and directors to work within and from. McArthur asserts that SFPF's production policy is not articulated in terms of cultural need. *Venus Peter*, *Play Me Something*, *Silent Screem*, *Blue Black Permanent* and *Prague* refute him. The fund seeks out and develops talent and does not limit its support to any special type of project or aesthetic. The evidence of these films shows the range and diversity of our commitment.

McArthur writes that our main impulse is "towards projects which will attract finance from diverse sources". Imaginative films which appeal to more than a few old cultural apparatchiks are generally expensive. And our track record shows that we are by no means devoted only to the commercial mainstream. Indeed, McArthur later chides us for not being sufficiently profitable. Under McArthurite theory, the larger the project, the less Scottish it becomes. Does this mean Scots films are destined to be small and poor? What is this cultural ghetto into which he wishes to herd us? His slogan "poor cinema" is as metaphorically inept as it is strategically misguided. Without any evidence, it fetishises a level of production costs (pulled out of an academic old hat?) and mistakenly links it to cultural and economic profitability. The notion of pleasure is ignored and the idea of audience neglected.

All the errors and misconceptions of McArthur's piece stem from a culturally, aesthetically and temperamentally out-of-touch view of film and film-making. It would be tedious to deal with these errors in detail since they are merely dots in a

pointillist painting which is itself without value. He seems to be unaware of the major institutional changes wrought in recent years, of the tremendous success of bodies inspired by the Scottish Film Council such as Scottish Screen Locations. He appears to see the growth in our co-operation with broadcasters as threatening rather than liberating. He perhaps missed the heartening news that our policies have inspired government to increase SFPF funding by 100 per cent. (Ask other arts bodies how they fared last year?) He is wary of the fact that through our initiatives with local development agencies we are well on the way to creating significant new sources of production finance for our film-makers. He seems to be looking at us through the wrong end of a telescope. Sadly, the only person made to look small is Colin McArthur.

It is disheartening to find *Sight and Sound*, which has been showing hopeful signs of vigour lately, giving space to this kind of non-event article. To those of us engaged in trying to find support mechanisms for British film-makers of all kinds, it is unhelpful to give space to a pseudo-debate about a sterile non-issue.

Beverly Hills, California

Jurassic McArthur

From Douglas Mackinnon, *Crash Films*

'In Praise of a Poor Cinema' shows that Colin McArthur is frustratingly out of touch with most of us in Scotland who make or aspire to make films. And it is nothing short of nightmarish that he should suggest "Poor Scottish Cinema" as the name for his new movement. Get a grip, man!

He has a go at Michael Caton-Jones for not making films in Scotland after graduating. Maybe he expected the SFPF to have him sign the Scottish Declaration of Independence before he got his cash. The fact is that Caton-Jones' graduation film, *The Riveter*, was one of the best of recent short films made from Scotland. Anyway, many other graduates (myself included) from the NFTS who have been helped by the SFPF over the years have ended up back in Scotland, making films - Jim Shields, Paul Murton, Alistair Scott, Kate Swan. The support of these graduation films has guaranteed practical experience in fiction film-making for a range of other people within Scotland.

McArthur feels that a nationally specific Scottish cinema is becoming increasingly remote. From where I'm standing, it feels as difficult an aspiration as ever, but not remote. There is much healthy activity on the short film front. The establishment of Comataidh Telebhisean Gaidhlig has already made an impact - who would have thought that a Gaelic feature would go to Cannes? Also, over the last few years there has been much significant activity on the feature film front.

Of course there should be more. We need the government to take the culture of film seriously. (We also need the television networks to take seriously our right to a 10 per cent or so network access.) But to me it feels like a pretty vibrant film community.

There certainly are dinosaurs roaming about, and I would suggest that Colin McArthur is in danger of becoming one of them. Maybe we should create a Scottish Jurassic Park, where all the old battles can

be fought out again and again? Or we could just get on with it, which is what a lot of us here in Scotland are trying to do.

Partick, Glasgow

Records and rumours

From Peter Cowie, *Variety*

In your July issue an unnamed contributor asks, what is happening to *Variety*? As most of the comments that follow this rhetorical question are inaccurate, I wonder why that person could not have picked up the phone and called us here? As it is, the piece is a rag-bag of reheated rumours, and I hasten to set the record straight.

Variety has not closed its bureaux in Madrid, Paris or Rome. (We never had a Stockholm bureau.)

To say that veteran writers have been dumped is like criticising you yourself for deciding no longer to use certain familiar *Sight and Sound* writers who were aboard when you joined the BFI.

Weekly *Variety* is not "loss-making".

Weekly *Variety* and *Daily Variety* have not been "merged". What we have done is to combine the copy desks and electronic facilities of the two papers. We continue to have a major office in New York, with several people, including the publisher Gerry Byrne working permanently there.

Peter Bart has been editorial director of both weekly and *Daily Variety* for over a year.

Deborah Young was for many years a freelance reviewer for *Variety*. She became bureau chief three years ago and is now returning to her previous role.

With an ABC audited sale of some 31,000 copies per week, *Variety* continues to be the market leader. Inevitably, that success provokes envy, and rumour-mongering is part of the game. But I am surprised that such a sober journal as *Sight and Sound* should print a stream of malicious comments without calling anyone for comment.

London W1

Additions and correction

February 1993 The following credits were omitted from the review of *Deep Cover*.

Music Michel Colombier

Songs "Deep Cover" by Dr Dre, Colin Wolfe, performed by Dr Dre, Snoop Doggy Dog; "Love or Lust" by Dr Dre, Colin Wolfe, Eric "The Drunk" Borders, performed by Jewel; "Linda Mexicana", "Cueros y Cuerdas", "Yo Te Quiero" by and performed by Marcos Loya; "The Way (is In The House)" by Reggie Calloway, Vincent Calloway, Keith Robertson, Steve Beckham, performed by Calloway; "Digits" by Mark Taylor, performed by the Deele; "Typical Relationship" by Zach Harmon, Christopher Troy, Valerie Davis, performed by Times 3; "Down wi' My Nigga" by Snoop Doggy Dog, 3 2, performed by Paradise; "The Sex is On" by C. Taylor, R.G. Monge, M. Lynn, performed by Po' Broke and Lonely; "I See Ya Jay" by Bilal Bashir, Johnathan Scott, performed by Ragtime; "Silent Night" by E.L. Hefe, performed by 101 Strings; "Nickel Slick Nigga" by J. Long, K. Birdsong, R. Ayres, performed by Ko Kane; "Depth of Thought" by and performed by Nate Philips; "Mr Lover Man" by R. Gordon, M. Sennett, H. Lindo, performed by Shabba Ranks, Chevelle Franklin
August 1993 *Super Mario Brothers* (page 50) should read *Super Mario Bros*.

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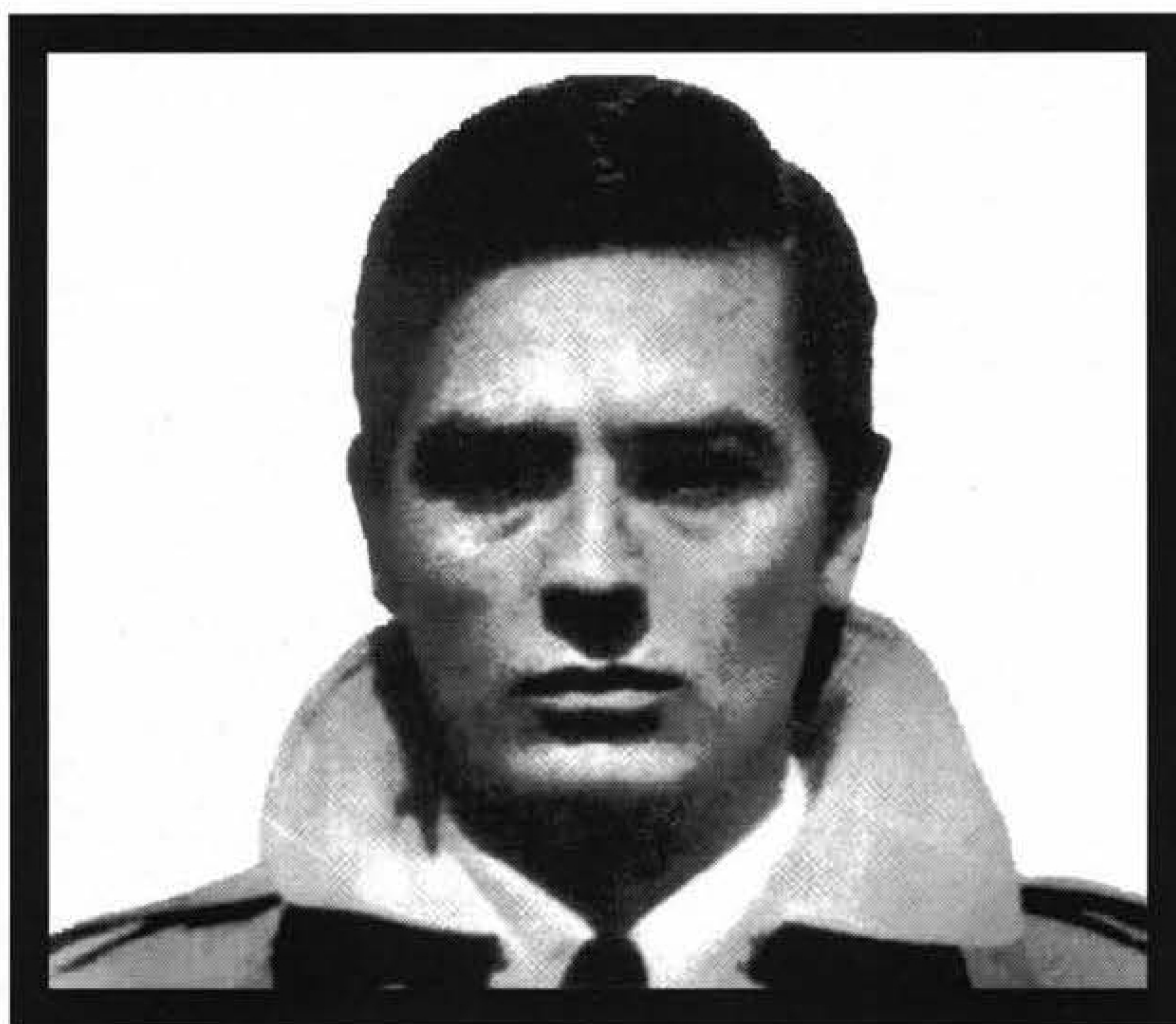
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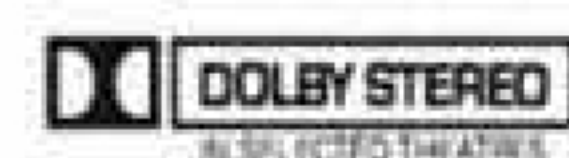
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